editor's choice

Vagabond

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 9

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English Edition

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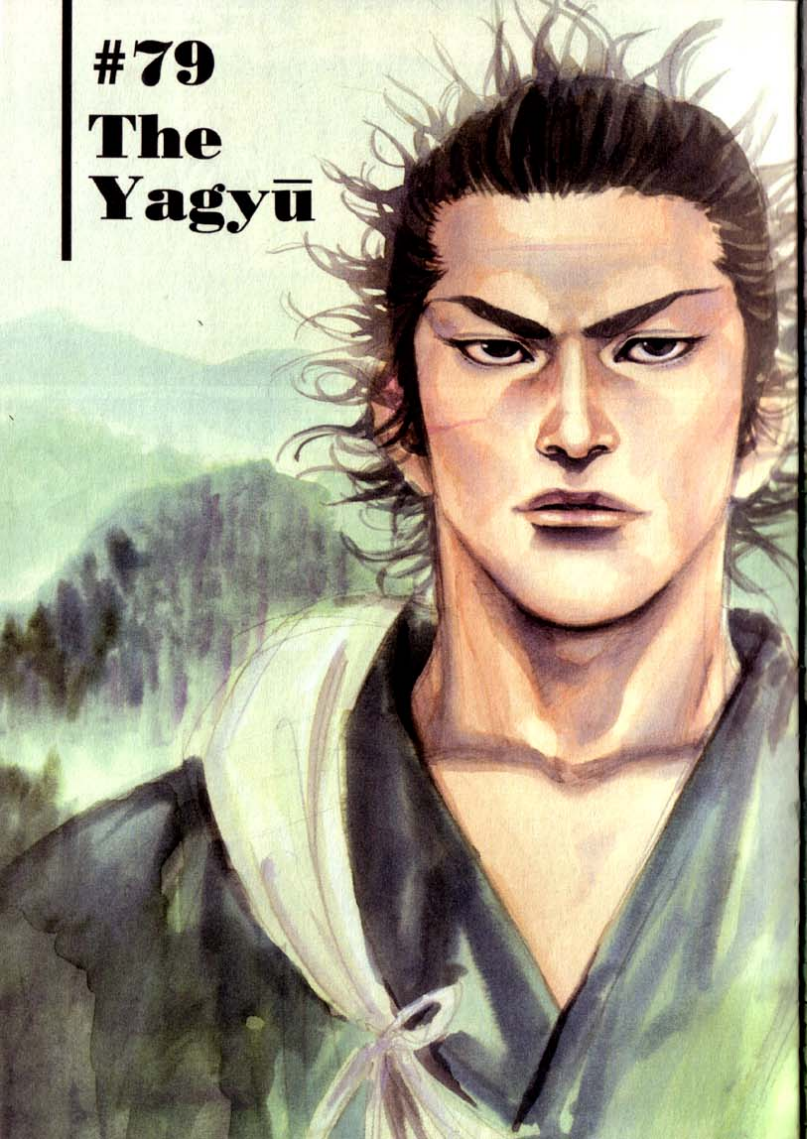
JŌTARŌ, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE...?
YOU SAID YOU WERE LEAVING ME.

WHEN WE FIRST WENT TO HŌZŌIN ...
...YOU SAID, "WE'LL BECOME STRONGER."
NOT JUST ME, BUT BOTH OF US...

THAT'S WHY...

LOOKS LIKE...
...WE'RE HERE...

I DIDN'T LOSE...
-TACTICAL RETREAT.
SO... EVEN THOUGH YOU LOST AND RAN AWAY THAT FIRST TIME...
...I KNEW YOU'D COME BACK TO DEFEAT INSHUN.



YAGYŪ
TERRITORY...

I'M
GOING TO
BECOME
STRONGER!!

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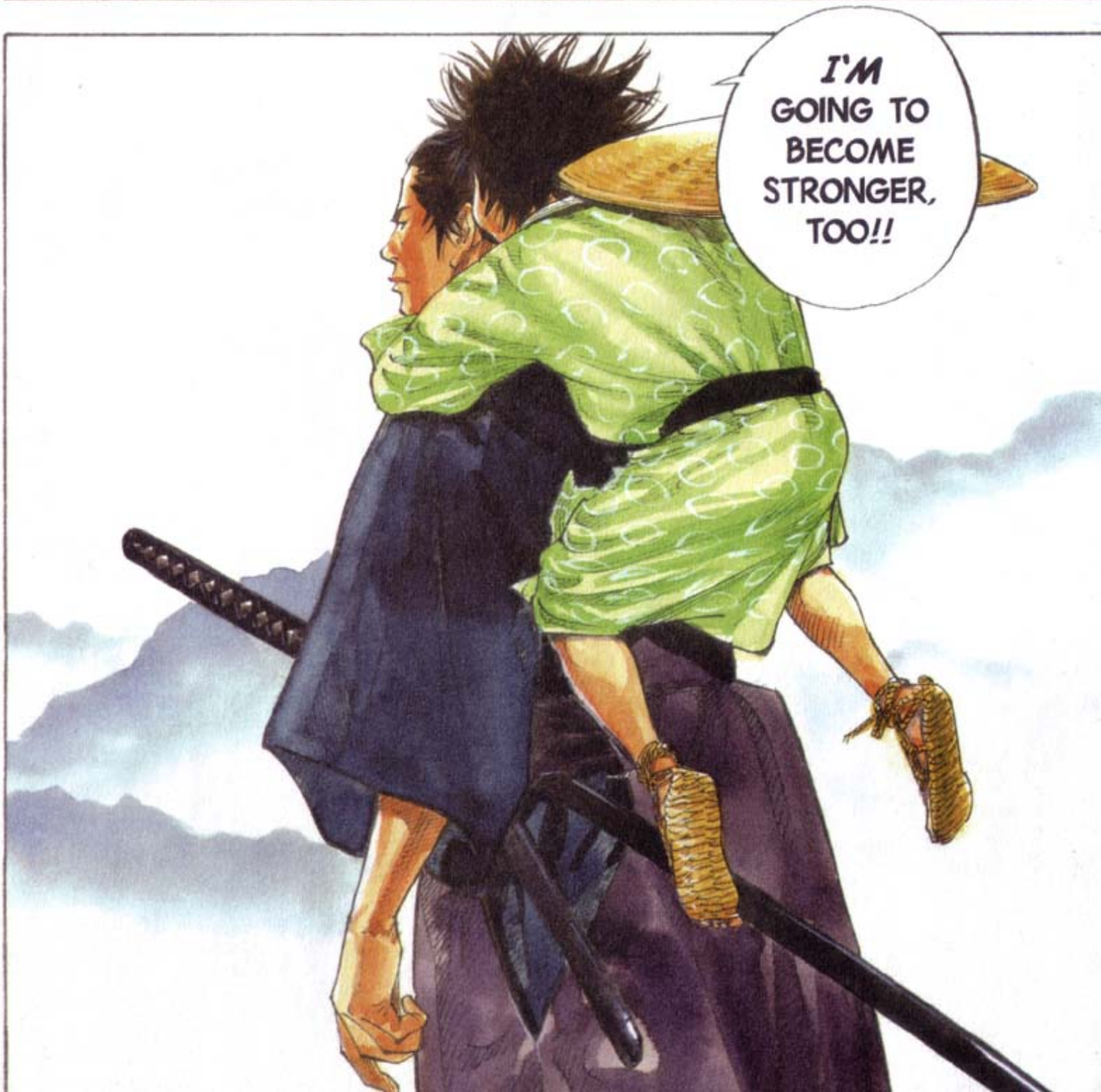

I'M GOING TO BECOME STRONGER, TOO!!

FWOSH
HEY!!
MASTER, SLOW DOWN!
TP TP TP TP
I'M GOING TO FALL!
AHA HA HA!!
SIR!

A LETTER FOR YOU, SIR.
OTSU...

I'LL GO LOOK FOR HIM THERE.
THANK YOU.
THE MASTER HAS GONE TO PRACTICE AT THE DOJO...
OH...

I HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE...
SOMEDAY SHE'S GOING TO MARRY SOMEONE AND--

AND SHE'S ALSO DEVELOPING A CERTAIN GRACE.
SHE GETS MORE BEAUTIFUL BY THE DAY.

HMPH...
YAY! I GOT YOU!

HUH?
VSH
YOU'RE LEAVING YOURSELF WIDE OPEN.

PLEASE DON'T TELL THE MASTER ABOUT THIS...
.....
YOU'RE A RETAINER OF THE ESTEEMED YAGYŪ CLAN. YOU MUSTN'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN SO EASILY!

IS THAT YOU, OTSŪ?

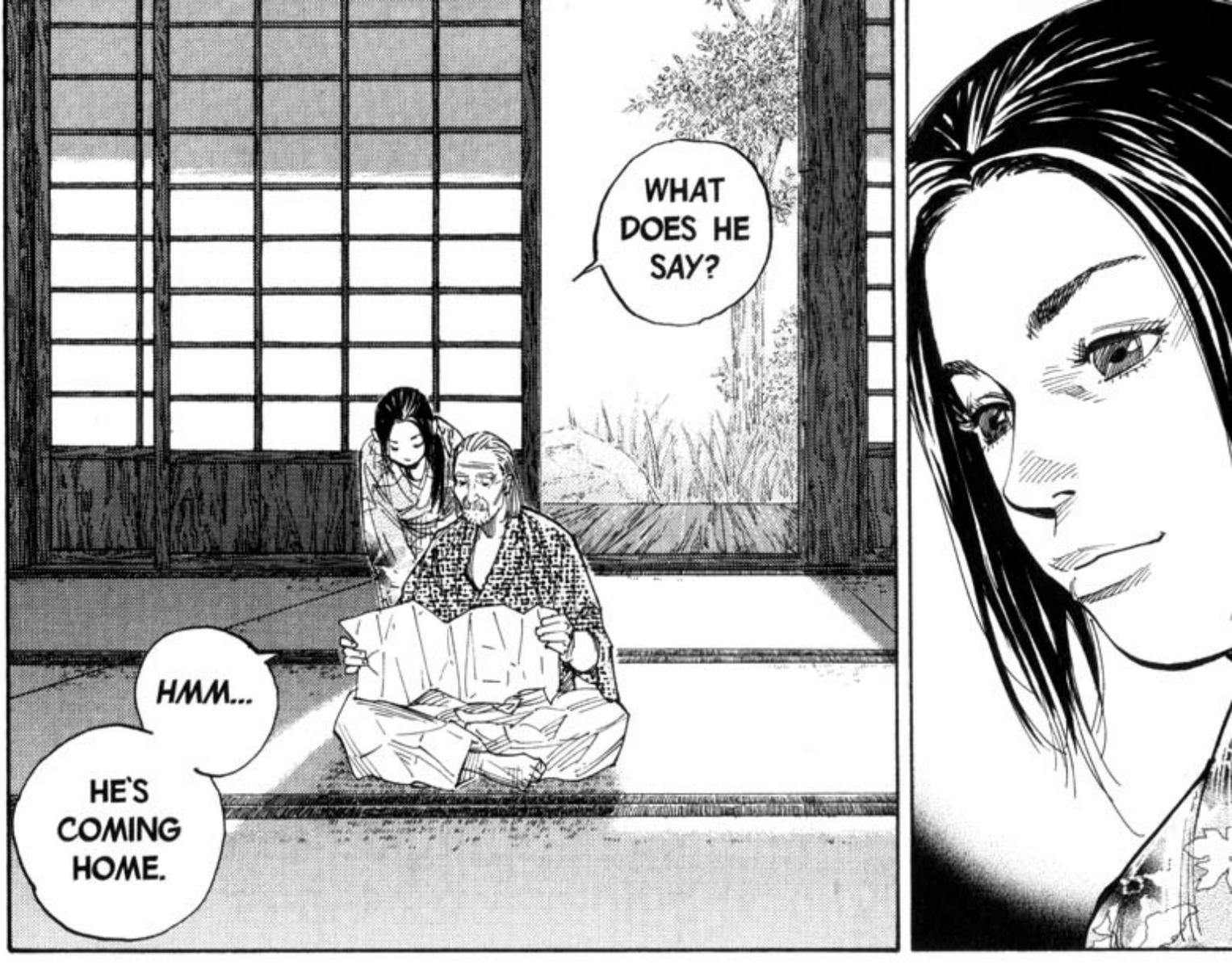
THERE IS NO LIMIT TO TECHNIQUE.
THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT.
YOU'RE A MASTER SWORDSMAN.
AND YET YOU STILL TRAIN SO HARD?
YOU'RE SO GREAT, EVEN YOUR SON IN EDO IS TEACHING SWORDSMANSHIP TO THE SHOGUN.

OTSŪ, ARE YOU HERE FOR A REASON? THE DOJO IS NO PLACE FOR AN IDLE VISIT.
I BROUGHT YOU A LETTER FROM YOUR GRANDSON.
WHICH GRANDSON?
HYŌGONOSUKE...

FOOSH
FLIP

REALLY?!
HYOGONO-SUKE?!
WHAT?
HYŌGONO-SUKE?!
HE'S COMING BACK?!
WHEN DOES HE ARRIVE?!

.....
WELL...
...IS *THAT* THE WAY SWORD SAINTS EXPRESS THEIR JOY?
HMPH!
HE MAY BE KNOWN AS A SWORD SAINT, BUT HE STILL DOTES OVER HIS GRANDSON.


WHAT DOES HE SAY?
HMM...
HE'S COMING HOME.

TUP
TUMP
TUMP

HMM...
HONDA TOMIMASA--CHIEF RETAINER OF THE YŪKI CLAN OF ECHIZEN.
NO!!
THE POWER DOESN'T COME FROM THE SWORD!
PUT YOUR GUT INTO IT!!
THUD
NNGH!
THWAK
START ALL OVER AGAIN!!
THAT'S NO GOOD!!

THOSE WHO HAVE THE PERSEVERANCE TO REMAIN TRULY DESERVE TO BE HERE.
INDEED!

KLAK
YOU'RE SO HARD ON THEM, SHŌDA.
KLAK
THOSE WHO LACK THE PROPER DISCIPLINE HAVE NO PLACE WITH THE YAGYŪ.

KLAK
KLAK
HE HANDLES HIS SWORD WELL.
THAT MAN OVER THERE...

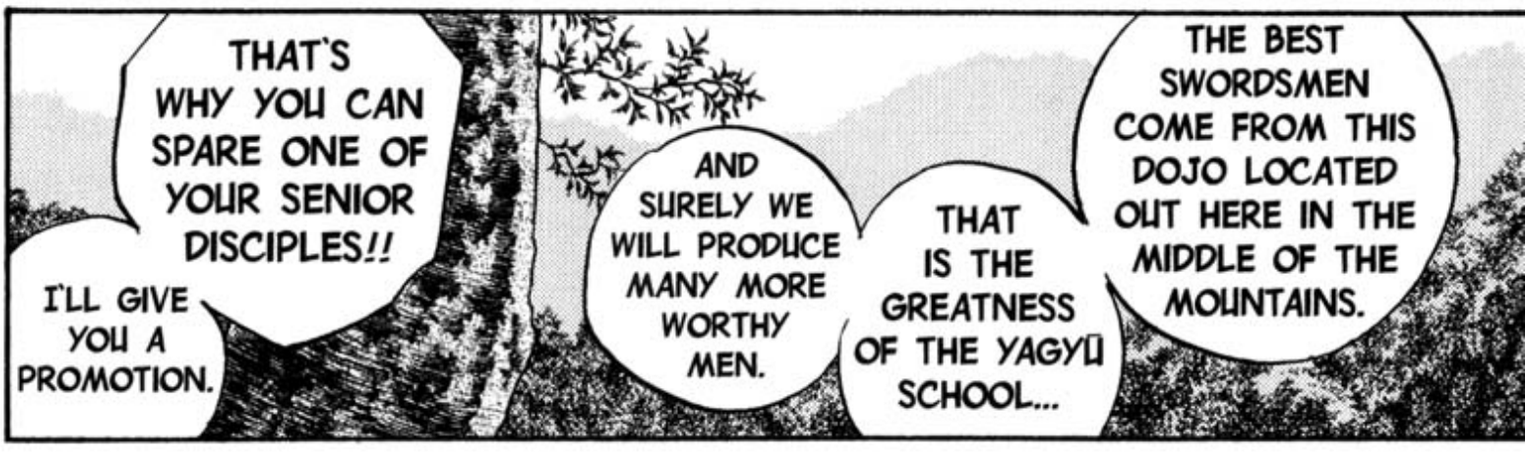
HE'S OUR STABLE-MAN...
IF HE COMES TO MY FIEF...
...HE'LL DO MORE THAN LOOK AFTER THE HORSES...
WON'T YOU GIVE HIM TO ME?

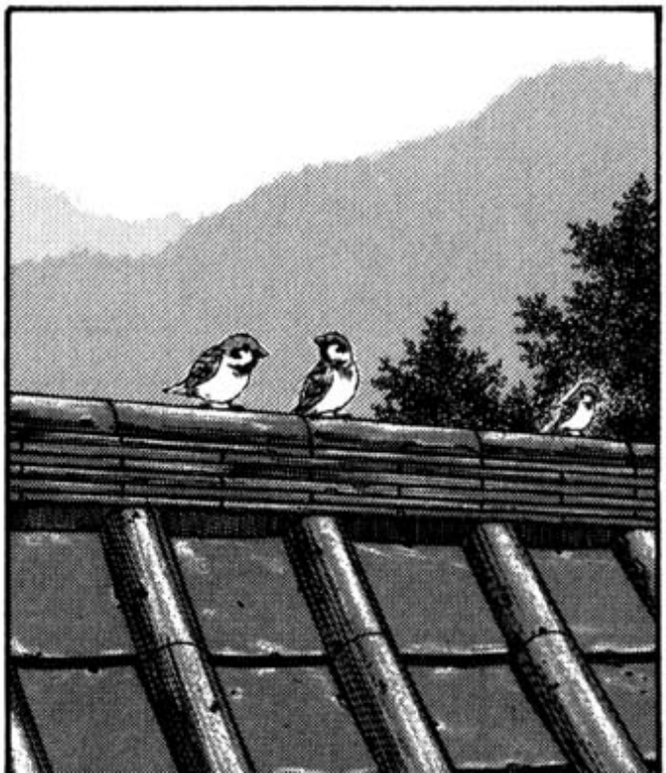
THAT'S MURATA...
MURATA YOZŌ.

IS THAT A "NO?"

KLAK
HE, TOO, IS A SPLENDID SWORDS-MAN.
I'D LIKE TO EMPLOY HIM AS WELL!
TUMP
THWAK
TUMP
FUNK
OUR CHIEF FOOT SOLDIER.
AND THAT MAN IS DEBUCHI MAGOBE.
AND THAT IS KIMURA SUKEKURŌ...
...BOOK-KEEPER.
HOW ABOUT IT?
I WANT HIM IN MY FIEF!!
AMAZING... HE HASN'T EVEN BROKEN A SWEAT!!

THESE THREE MEN AND I, SHŌDA KIZAEMON...
YOU HAVE A GOOD EYE.
AHEM ...
TOGETHER, WE ARE KNOWN AS THE SENIOR DISCIPLES OF THE YAGYŪ.


THAT'S WHY YOU CAN SPARE ONE OF YOUR SENIOR DISCIPLES!!
I'LL GIVE YOU A PROMOTION.
AND SURELY WE WILL PRODUCE MANY MORE WORTHY MEN.
THAT IS THE GREATNESS OF THE YAGYŪ SCHOOL...
THE BEST SWORDSMEN COME FROM THIS DOJO LOCATED OUT HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MOUNTAINS.



I SEE...
SLUMP

YOU'D RATHER STAY HERE?
YOU REFUSE ?!
HMM...

SO THERE *WILL* BE A SUCCESSOR...
I WONDER ...
HE'S TRAINED FOR A TIME AT HIGO AND HE'S BEEN TRAVELING ABOUT THE COUNTRY FOR STILL MORE TRAINING. HOW MUCH STRONGER HAS HE BECOME?
HYŌGONOSUKE IS COMING BACK!!
BUT *I'M* STRONGER NOW, TOO!!
I WON'T LOSE TO HIM!
.....
THE SHINKAGE STYLE SHALL BE PASSED DOWN FROM SEKISHŪSAI TO HYŌGONOSUKE!!
OUT OF ALL OF HIS GRANDSONS ...
...THE MASTER HAS CHOSEN *HIM*...
HYŌGONOSUKE SHALL BE THE ONE...

NOW THAT WE'RE HERE...
...HOW DO WE GET IN...?
YOU'RE PLANNING ON DOING SOMETHING RECKLESS AGAIN...
I CAN TELL BY THE EXPRESSION ON YOUR FACE.

I'M GOING TO TAKE HIM ON...
THE INVINCIBLE YAGYŪ SEKISŪSAI.

EVERYONE WILL.
WELL...

IS IT THAT PRE-POSTEROUS? YOU LAUGH AT ME?

GASP!!

...THE HEAVENS WON'T BE LAUGHING.

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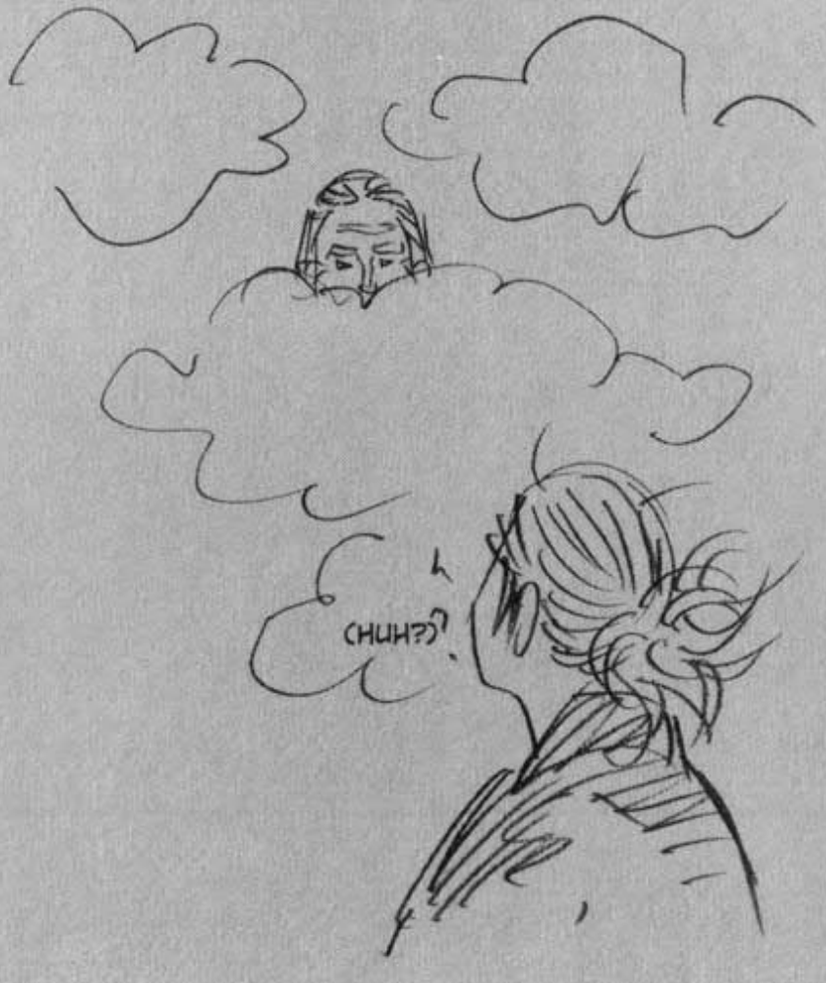

(HUH?)

AH...
KRICH
HMM...
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
YES...

THE AIR IS SO FRESH AND SWEET! I'M FINALLY HERE!
#80 Coming Home

HMPH!
SO THIS IS THE GREAT YAGYŪ CLAN--FAMED FOR THEIR SCHOOL OF MARTIAL ARTS. THEY'RE EVEN FAVORED BY THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE.

BETTER TO TAKE TIME AND COME UP WITH A GOOD PLAN.
I MUST NOT RUSH INTO THINGS.
.....

...HOW CAN I GET TO THEIR MASTER, YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI?
THE QUESTION IS...
LET'S GO, MASTER ...

I'M COMING FOR YOU, YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...

LET'S FIND SOME LODGINGS.
I'M EXHAUSTED !!
AND HUNGRY!!
SHUT UP...

DON'T YOU SEE...?
THE TREES HERE ARE OLD.
HUH? WHAT'S SO STRANGE ABOUT THAT?
THAT MEANS THERE HAVEN'T BEEN ANY BATTLES HERE IN A LONG TIME.
THIS LAND HAS SEEN NO ENEMY INVADERS.

THIS TERRITORY IS SO STRANGE...
THERE ARE SO MANY TREES.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

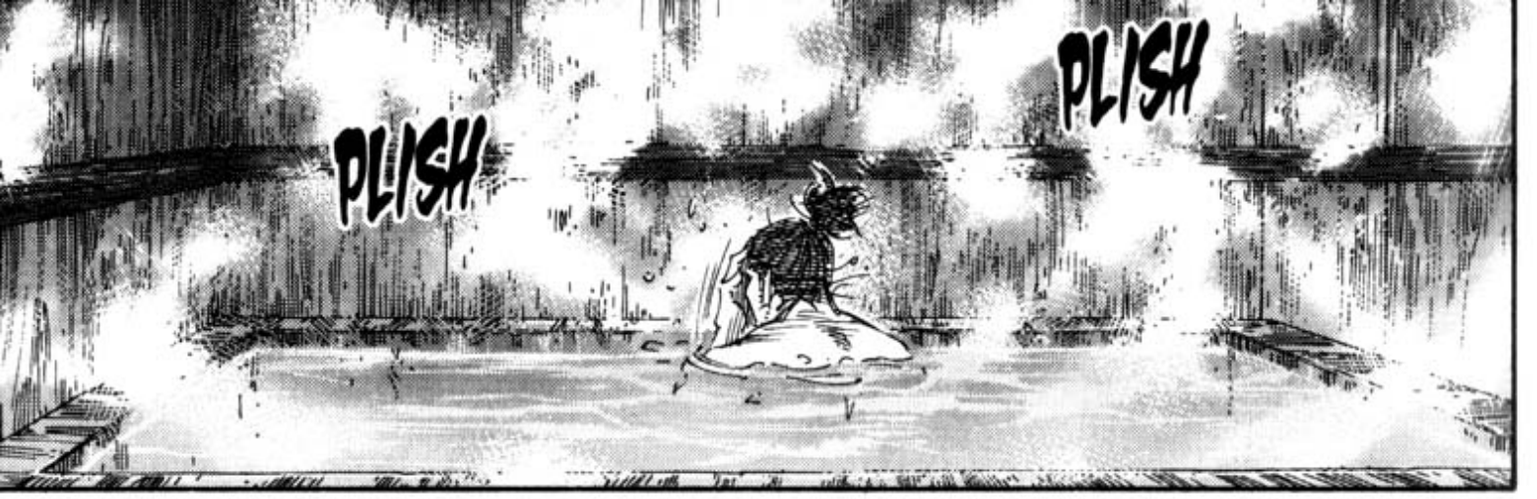
KYOTO ...
...AND OWARI...ALL SO CLOSE.
...OSAKA ...
AND YET SOMEHOW THIS SMALL CASTLE AND THIS MOUNTAIN VILLAGE HAS MANAGED TO SURVIVE ALL THE VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED.

IT'S PROOF POSITIVE OF YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI'S GREATNESS.
HMM...

HM?
SNIF SNIF
YOU SMELL.
SO DO YOU...
SNIF SNIF
...SOMETHING HORRIBLE.
HEH HEH!

STOP WHINING.
FWIP

I'M TIRED!
I CAN'T WALK ANY-MORE.


PLISH
PLISH

AHH!!

.....
SPLASH

WHY DOES HE INSIST ON BATHING HERE?
WASN'T HE EAGER TO GET HOME?

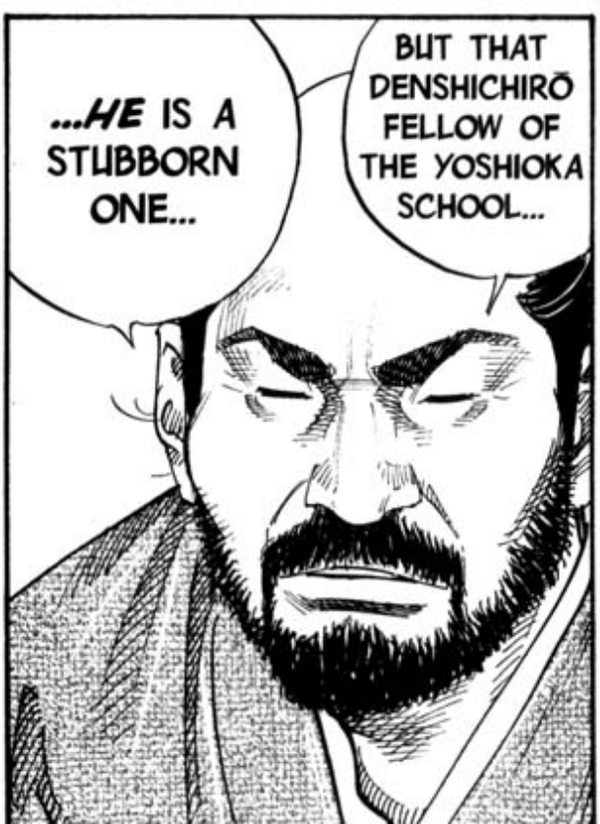
I HAVEN'T BEEN BACK SINCE I LEFT FOR HIGO...
THAT WAS THREE YEARS AGO...

I WANT TO CLEANSE MYSELF BEFORE I GO THROUGH THE CASTLE GATES.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MIGHTY SWORD SAINT?
HA HA HA!
.....
SIR...
YOU MUST BE LOOKING FORWARD TO HYŌGONOSUKE'S ARRIVAL.
HMM...
YES, WELL...

FWIP
MIND IF I BOAST ABOUT MY GRANDSON?
OTSŪ...
YES?
IT'S FINE.
GO RIGHT AHEAD.
EVER SINCE HE WAS A CHILD HE'S BEEN JUST LIKE ME...
HE'S INCREDIBLY STRONG.
DON'T TELL ANYONE I SAID SO...

KRICH
MASTER...
IT IS I, SHŌDA.


...HE IS A STUBBORN ONE...
BUT THAT DENSHICHIRŌ FELLOW OF THE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL...

DID YOU DEAL WITH HIM?
YES...I FOLLOWED YOUR INSTRUCTIONS AND RESPONDED ACCORDINGLY...

I WILL RETURN AGAIN TOMORROW!!
I WISH TO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT THE DOJO OF THE YAGYŪ!!
MUNE-NORI'S IN EDO...
...HYŌGO'S IN HIGO...
...AND THE OTHERS AREN'T AROUND.
HMPH! WHAT A PEST. YOU DID TELL HIM...
THAT IS OF NO CONCERN TO ME AS MY ONLY DESIRE IS TO MEET THE GREAT MASTER SEKISHŪSAI!!
TOMORROW THEN...
I SHALL RETURN!

PERHAPS I SHOULD TAKE HIM ON. WE'LL TEACH HIM A LESSON.

OTSŪ, YOU MET HIM A WHILE AGO.
THAT MAN BUILT LIKE A LOG.
I CAN'T BELEIVE HE'S STILL LINGERING AROUND.

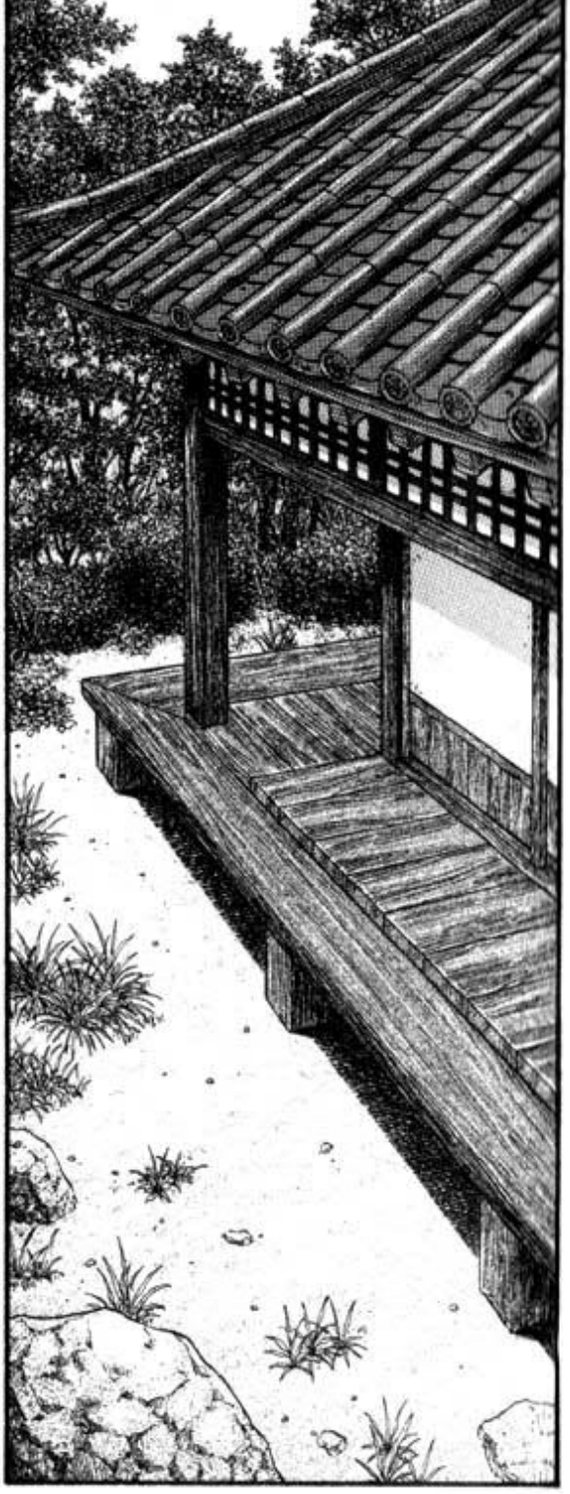
NO!
THERE'S NO POINT IN HAVING HIM BEAR A GRUDGE AGAINST US.

OTSŪ!
I LEAVE IT TO YOU.
AND YOUR BEAUTY.

ALTHOUGH I UNDERSTAND HOW HE MIGHT STRIKE A COMPETITIVE CHORD IN YOU--BOTH OF YOU RESEMBLING BEARS AND ALL.
!!
A BEAR ?!
HMM...

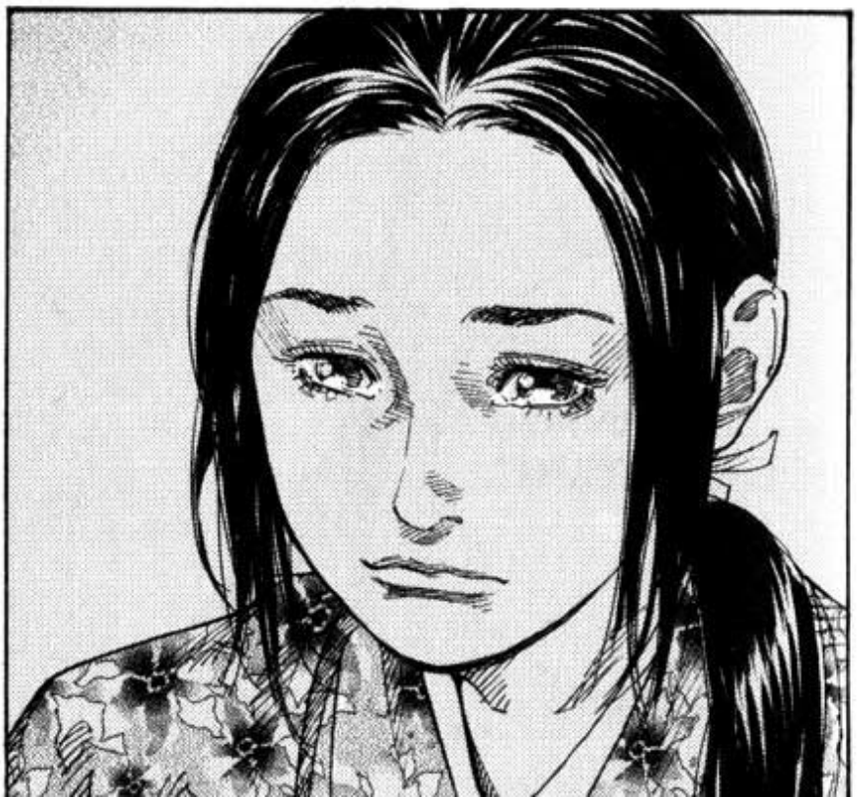
HM?
MY BEAUTY ?
SIR?

TAKE THIS TO HIM.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU.



PSST PSST
BY THE WAY, YOU DON'T THINK SHODA HEARD, DO YOU?
...MY BOASTING ?
HA HA HA!

WHA--?



OH, NO.
IT WON'T STOP.
.....
OTSŪ...
WHAT'S WRONG?
YOU DON'T WANT TO GO?

NO...
IT'S JUST THAT...

...I ENVY HYŌGONOSUKE...

HE HAS A PLACE TO COME HOME TO...
AND HIS GRANDFATHER...
...IS SO LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING HIM.

OTSŪ...
FWOM
SNIFF
YOU CAN STAY HERE FOREVER.

I HATE BATHS...
MMBL MMBL
I DON'T LIKE THEM EITHER.
BUT YOU SMELL BAD.
SO DO YOU!
HM?

HM...

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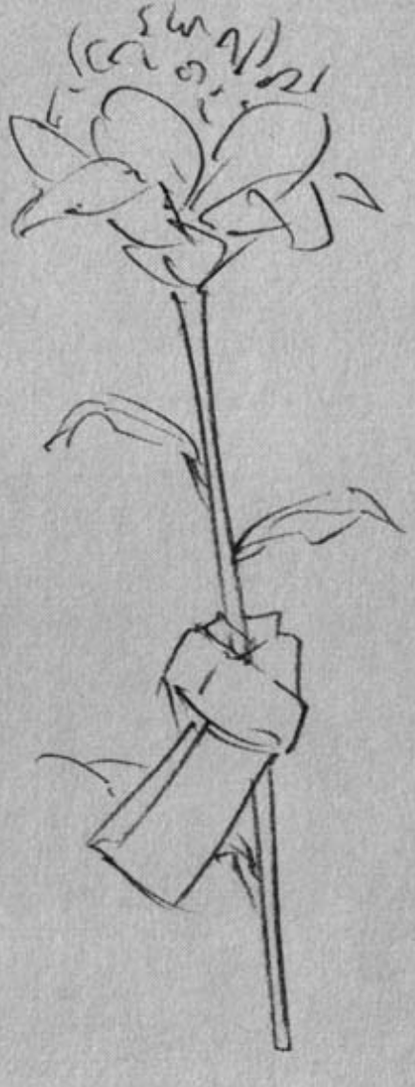


#81 The Peony Message

.....
FSSHHH
FSSHHH

.....

MASTER, HAVE YOU WASHED UP ALREADY?
YES.
I HOPE YOU DID A GOOD JOB...
`CAUSE NO PLACE WILL PUT US UP IF YOU SMELL BAD.

.....

YOU DISLIKE BATHING ...?

I DON'T LIKE IT EITHER.
THAT'S RIGHT...
.....
HE YOUR DISCIPLE ?
HMM...
MORE OR LESS...
YOU WEREN'T IN LONG ENOUGH.
I'M GETTING OUT NOW, OKAY?
BUT IT'S TOO HOT!
YIKES! IT'S TOO HOT!!
SPLSH
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME.

LET ME GUESS WHY YOU HATE BATHING.
HMPH...

YOUR ATTITUDE...
THE WAY YOU CARRY YOURSELF EVERY DAY.

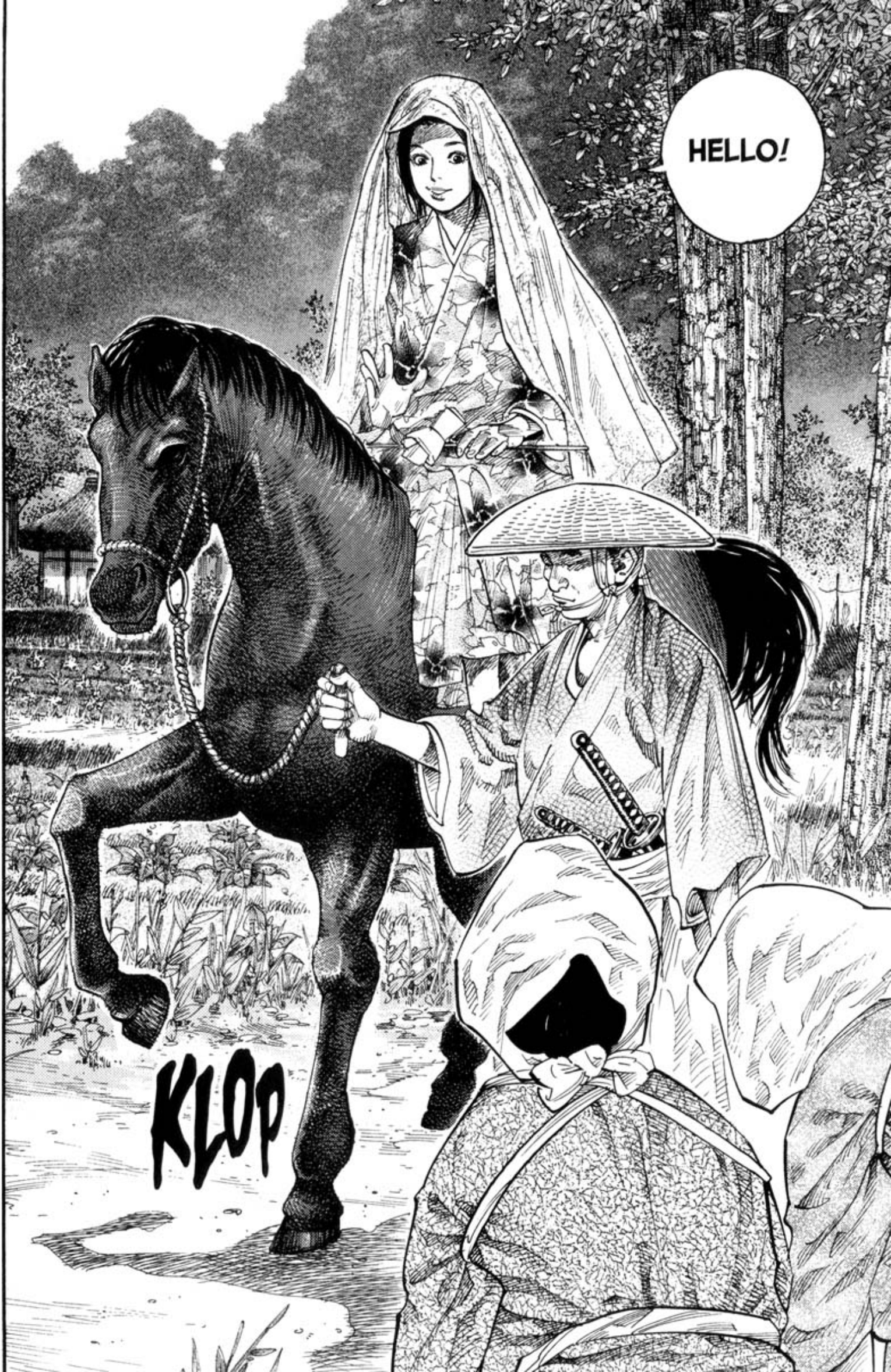
YOU'RE PREPARED TO BE ATTACKED AT ANY MOMENT.
JUST LIKE A CAT...
YOU'RE AFRAID THAT YOUR GUARDED AWARENESS WILL BE WASHED AWAY ALONG WITH THE DIRT.
THAT'S WHY YOU DON'T LIKE BATHING.
.....
...!

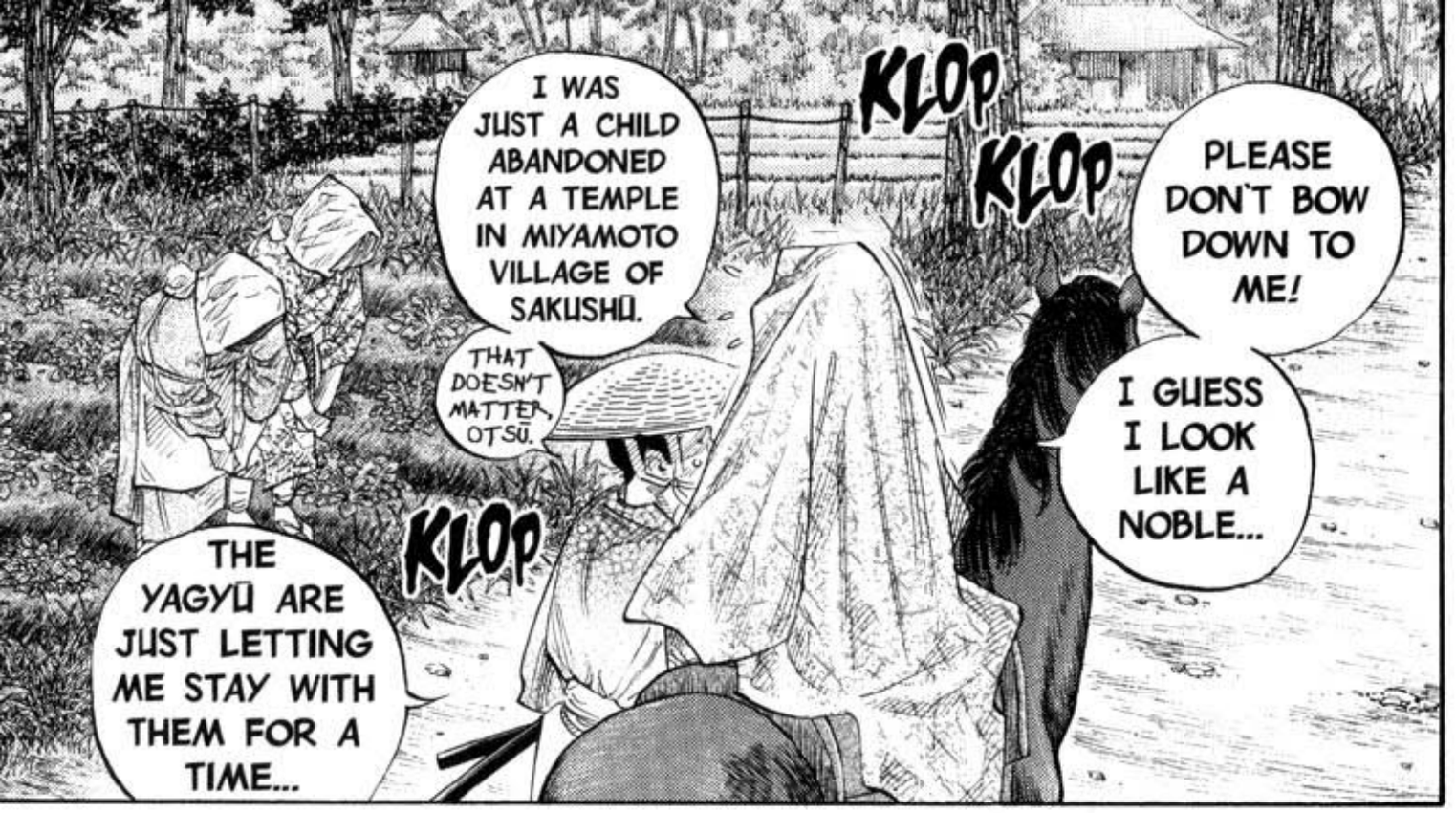
I GET THE FEELING THAT YOU AND I ARE SIMILAR.

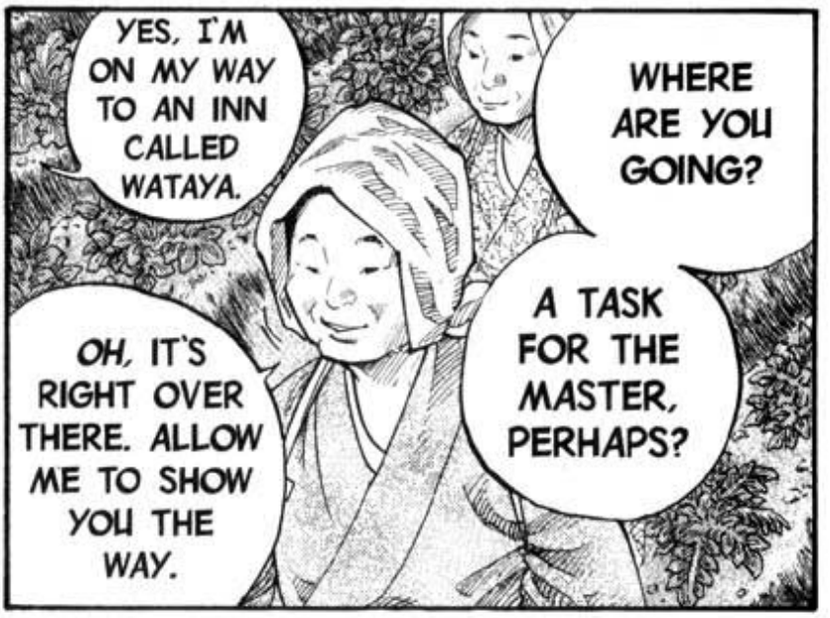
IT'S OTSŪ.
THERE SHE IS.
OTSŪ IS COMING THROUGH.

KLOP
KLOP
HEY!

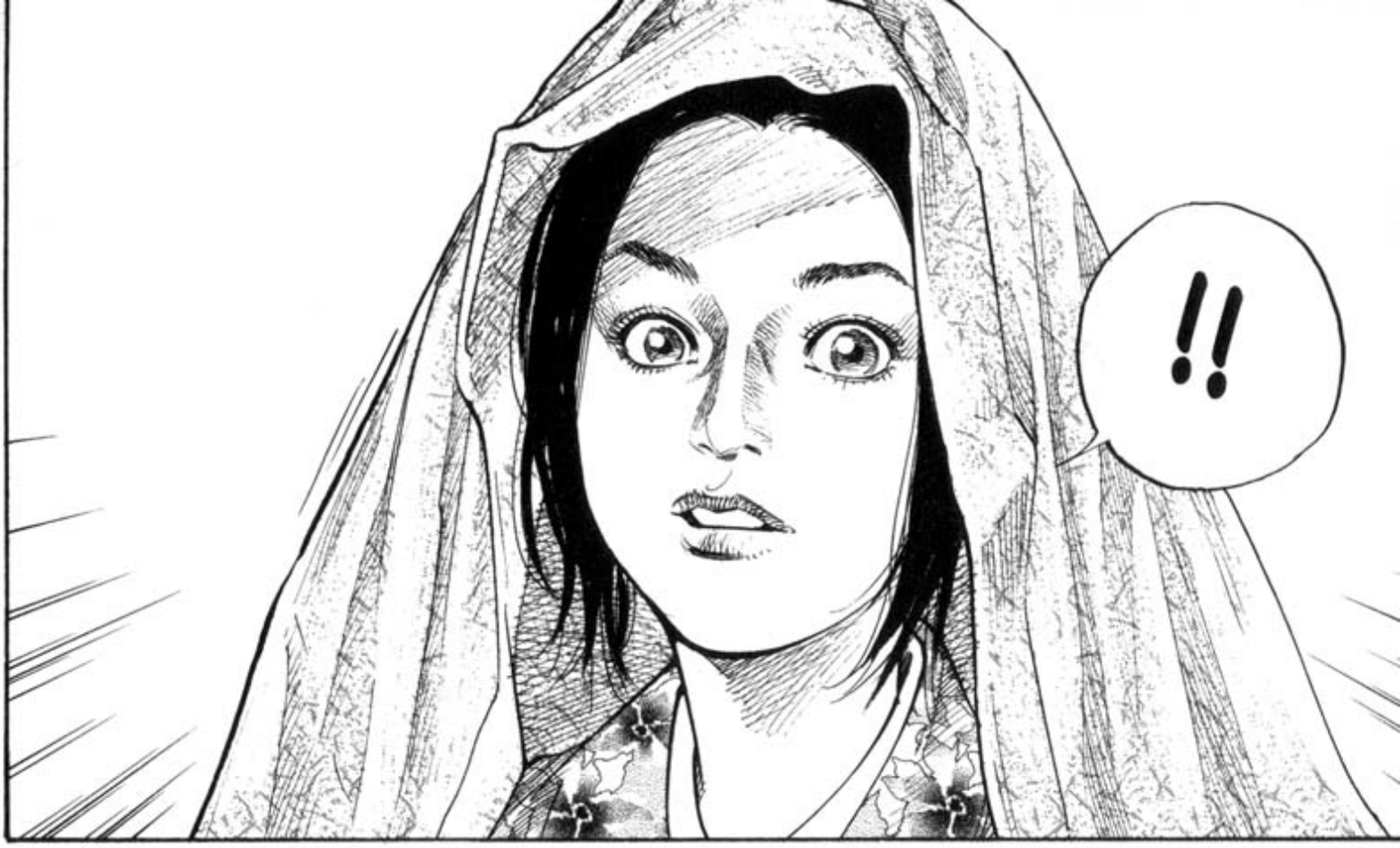
KLOP
KLOP


HELLO!
KLOP

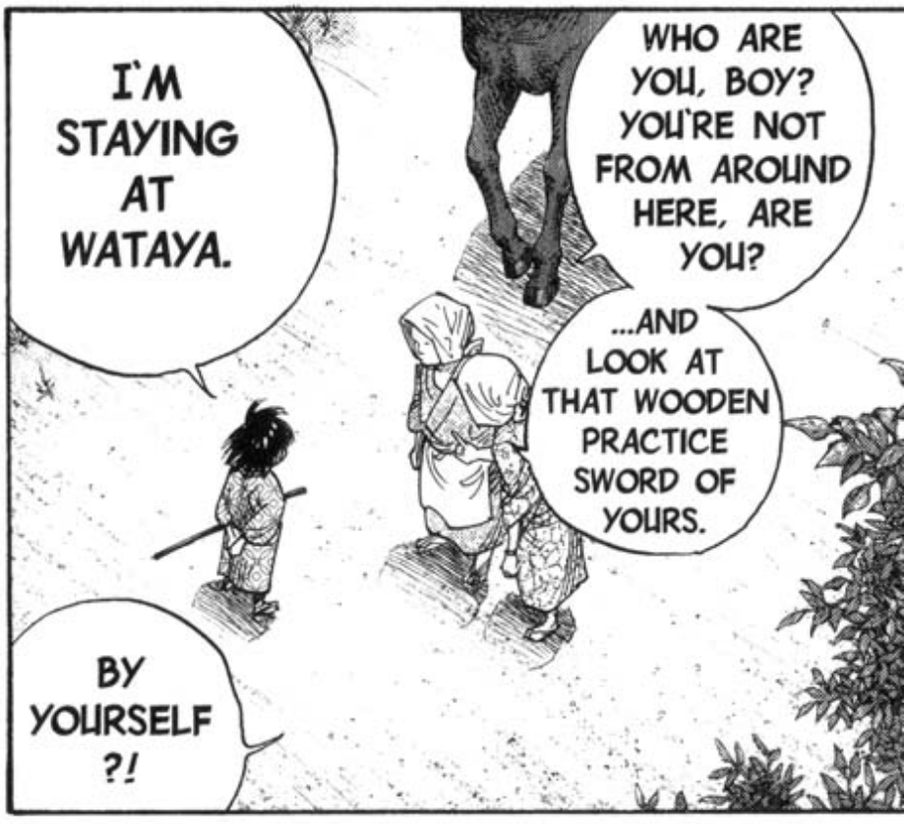

I WAS JUST A CHILD ABANDONED AT A TEMPLE IN MIYAMOTO VILLAGE OF SAKUSHŪ.
THAT DOESN'T MATTER, OTSŪ.
KLOP
KLOP
KLOP
PLEASE DON'T BOW DOWN TO ME!
I GUESS I LOOK LIKE A NOBLE...
THE YAGYŪ ARE JUST LETTING ME STAY WITH THEM FOR A TIME...


YES, I'M ON MY WAY TO AN INN CALLED WATAYA.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
A TASK FOR THE MASTER, PERHAPS?
OH, IT'S RIGHT OVER THERE. ALLOW ME TO SHOW YOU THE WAY.

A WOMAN RIDING A HORSE.
HMM...


!!

NO, WITH MY MASTER.


WHO ARE YOU, BOY? YOU'RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE, ARE YOU?
...AND LOOK AT THAT WOODEN PRACTICE SWORD OF YOURS.
I'M STAYING AT WATAYA.
BY YOURSELF ?!

I'M JŌTARŌ.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

WELL THEN, WHY DON'T YOU SHOW OTSŪ THERE?
WHAT?!
JŌTARŌ...
FWIP
ALL RIGHT...
ONLY TO THE ENTRANCE, THOUGH.
I WANT TO STAY OUTSIDE AND PLAY.
.....

DARN, I WORKED UP A SWEAT EVEN THOUGH I JUST TOOK A BATH.
MAYBE I'LL GO TAKE A SWIM IN THE RIVER.
HERE WE ARE.
...JŌTARŌ.
THANK YOU...
TP TP TP
.....
HE REMINDS ME OF TAKEZŌ...
HMM...

.....
HMM...?

SO...
...THAT'S IT?

HE ALSO SAID...
"I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO OFFER YOU SOME TEA..."
"...BUT MY HOUSE IS FILLED WITH AN UNCIVIL LOT..."
"...AND YOU ARE SUCH A MAN OF THE CITY. IT WOULD BE RATHER UNFORTUNATE FOR US TO BECOME THE BUTT OF JOKES."

I DID *NOT* COME FOR TEA!!
THE SWORD!!
I AM A SWORDS-MAN!!

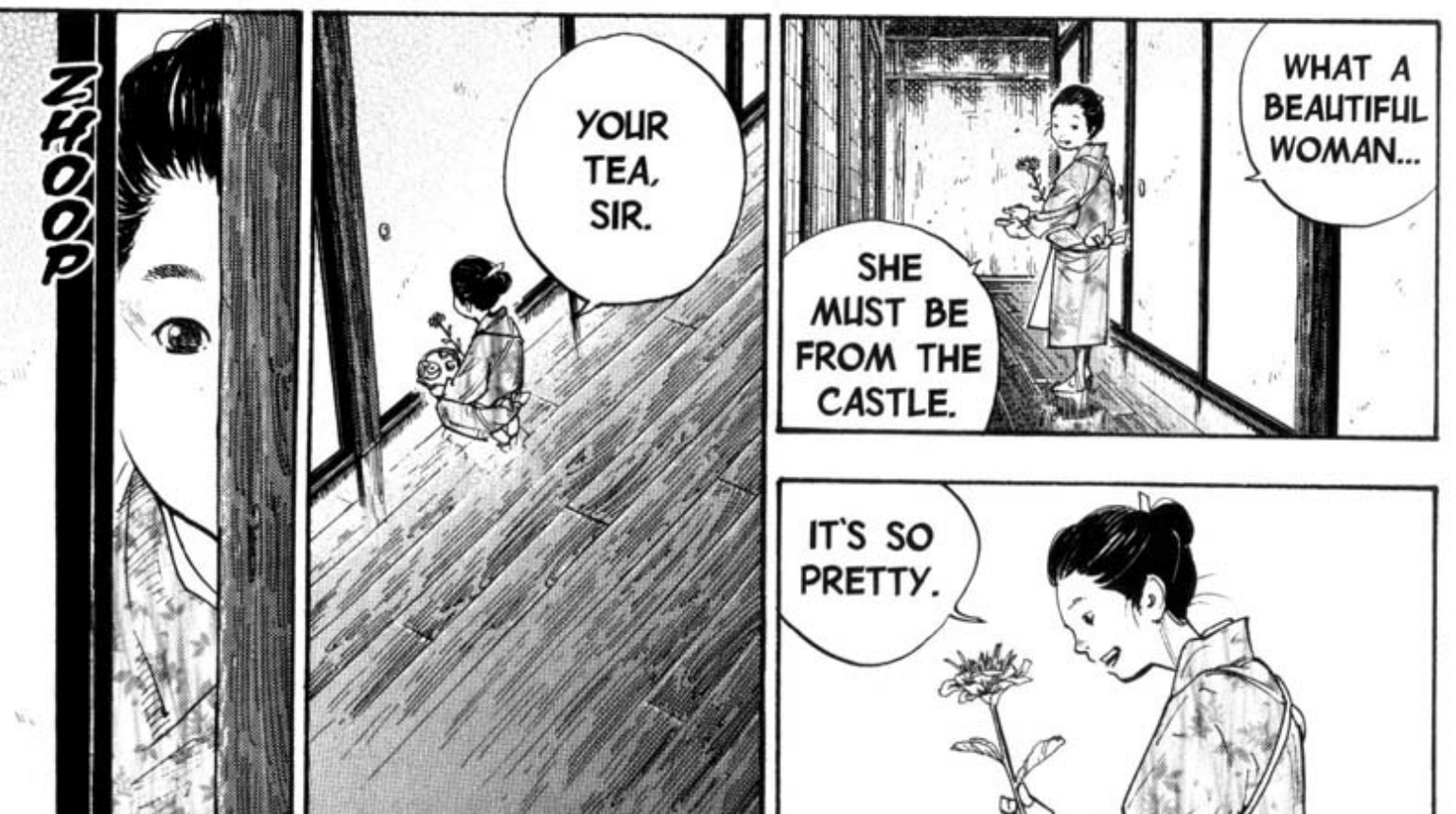
"PERHAPS..."
"...SOME OTHER TIME."

GASP!

DAMN IT! IF ONLY THAT BEARISH MAN I MET THE OTHER DAY WAS THE MESSENGER. I'D FORCE HIM TO INTRODUCE ME TO SEKISHŪSAI.
A TRUE WARRIOR HAS A WEAKNESS FOR BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.
HMM...
BUT THESE DAYS HE'S MUCH MORE AN OLD MAN THAN HE IS A WARRIOR.
I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU MUST FEEL...
UMM...
HE DOESN'T EVEN EAT MUCH.
THAT...
THAT IS A GIFT TO YOU FROM THE MASTER...
I UNDERSTAND.
HOWEVER, I SHALL RETURN...
AND I WILL SEE HIM THE NEXT TIME I COME BACK.
FMP
HMM...

DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT I, THE SECOND SON OF YOSHIOKA KEMPŌ...
...AM A MAN WITH A PREDILECTION FOR FLOWERS...?
NO...
I GUESS NOT.

HERE, THIS IS FOR YOU.
WHAT?!


WHAT A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN...
SHE MUST BE FROM THE CASTLE.
IT'S SO PRETTY.
YOUR TEA, SIR.
SHOOP

I SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN HIS NAME...

HMM...

THERE'S PLENTY OF STRONG MEN OUT HERE.

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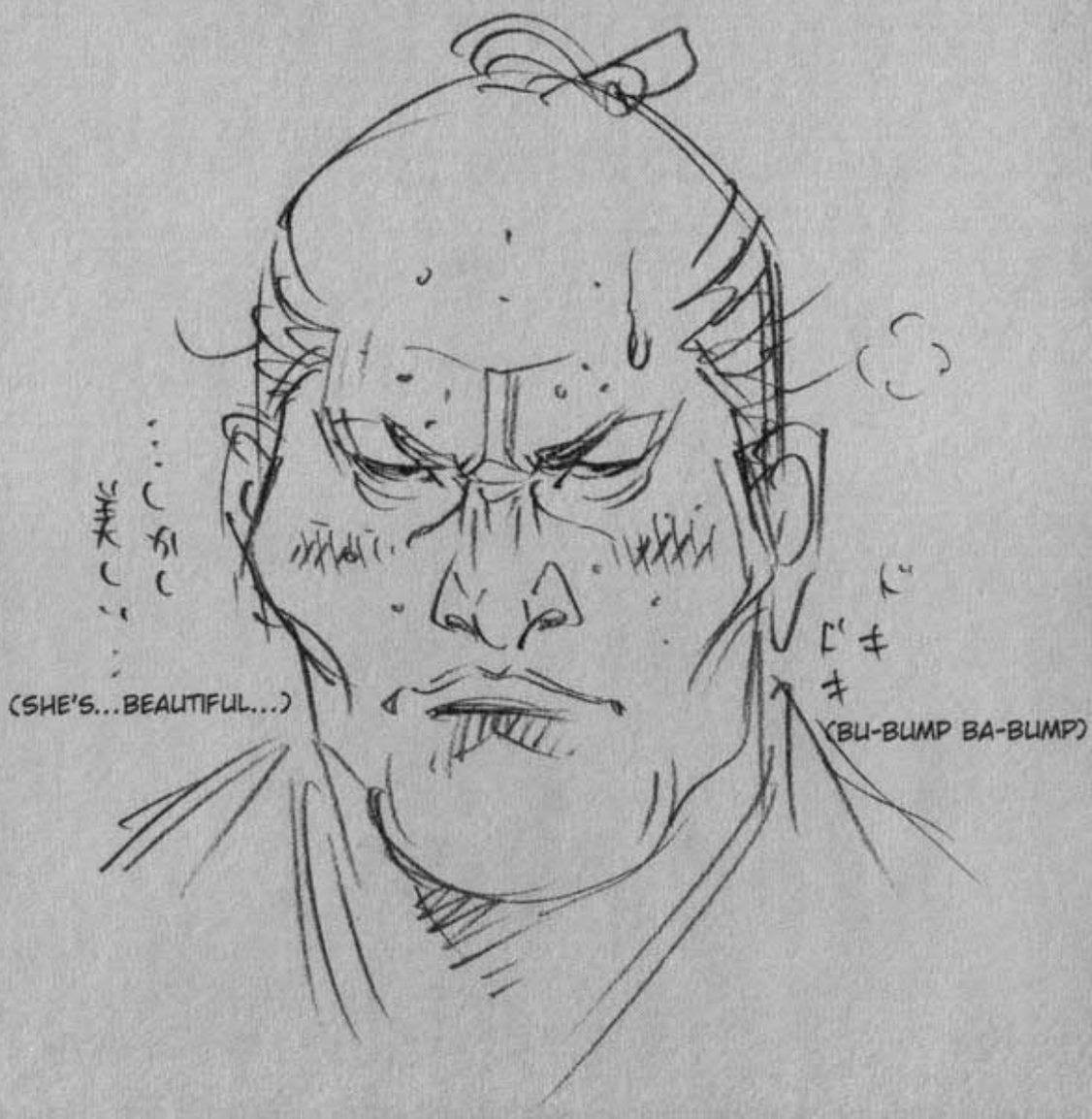
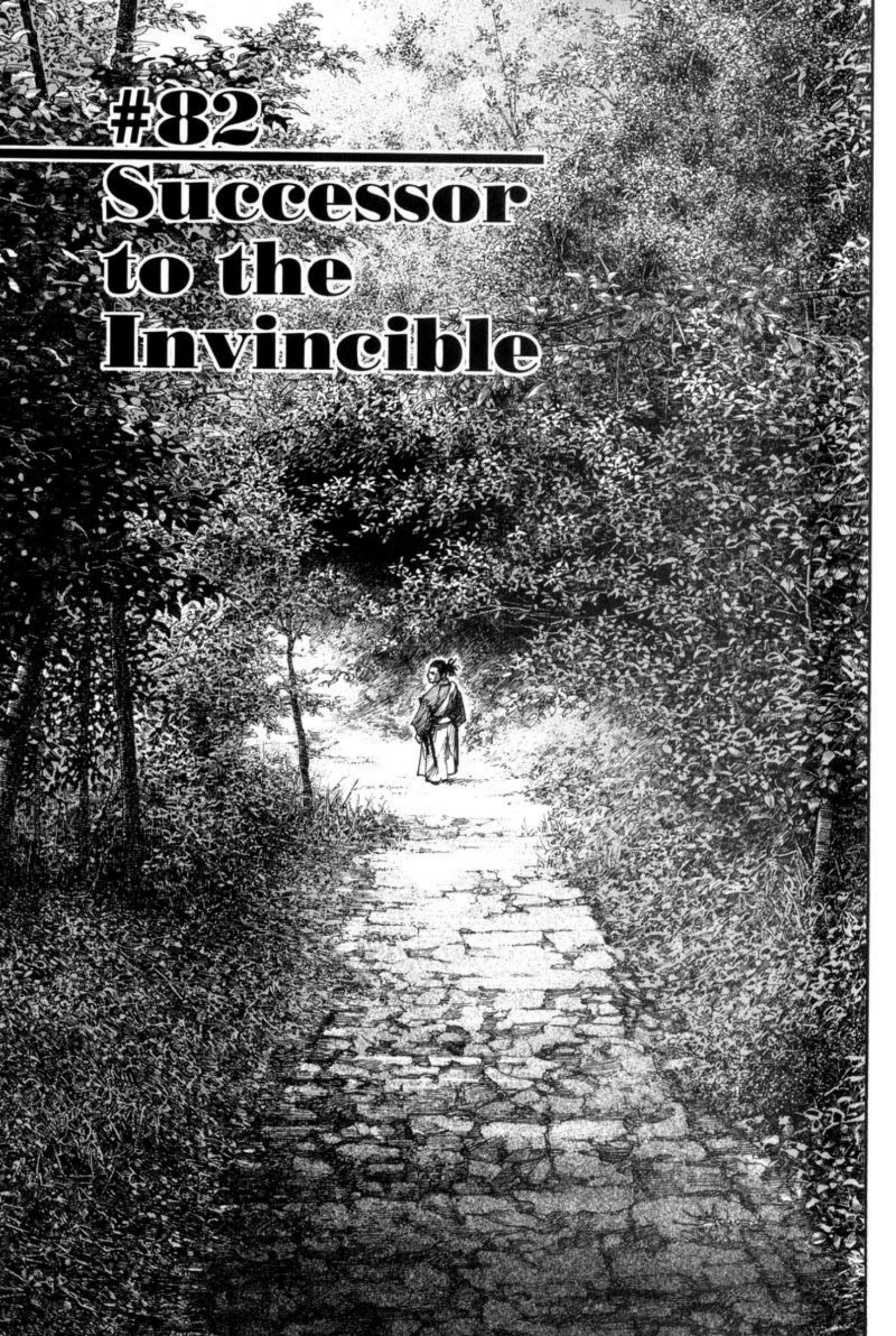

(SHE'S...BEAUTIFUL...)
(BU-BUMP BA-BUMP)


#82
Successor to the Invincible

UNGH...
THWAK
!!
I...
...SUR-
RENDER
...
ARE
YOU
ALL
RIGHT?
LOOKS
LIKE IT'S
BROKEN...

YOU'VE GOTTEN STRONGER, YOZŌ!!
!!
GASP!

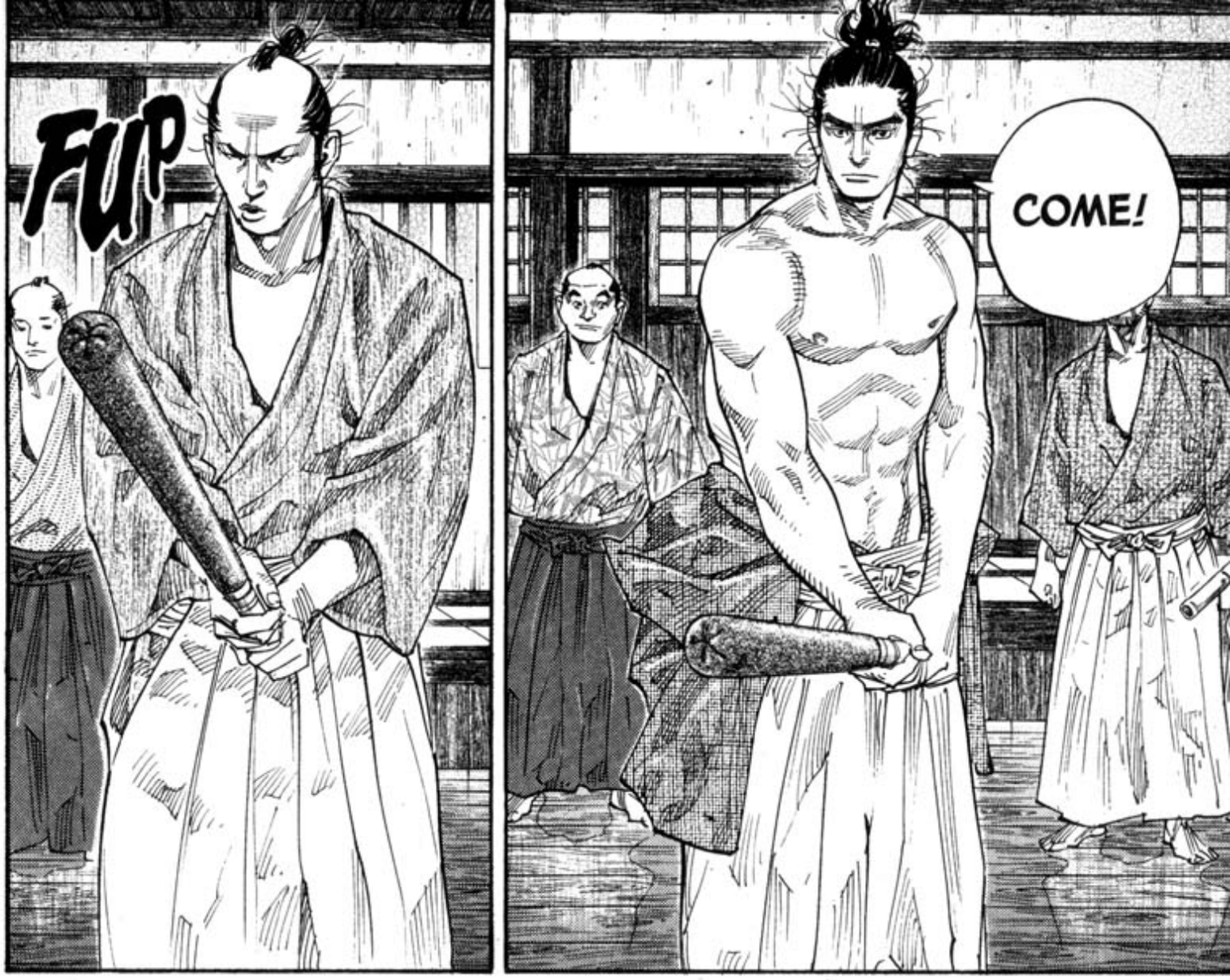
YOUNG MASTER!!

GRANDFATHER !!
I HAVE RETURNED!!

YOUNG MASTER!!
DID YOU JUST ARRIVE?
YES.
HYŌGONO-SUKE!
WELCOME HOME!

HEY, THAT'S NOT FAIR!!
I GET TO GO FIRST!!
THAT'S RIGHT, YOU JUST HAD A MATCH!! I'M UP NEXT!!
LET'S HAVE A MATCH!!

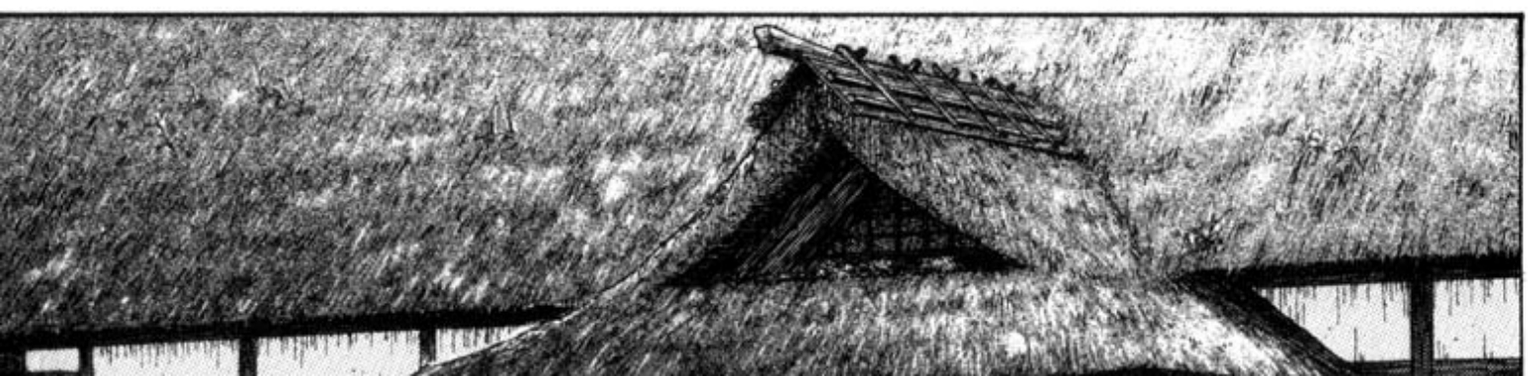
IT'S OKAY.
ENOUGH! THE YOUNG MASTER HAS JUST RETURNED FROM A LONG JOURNEY.
I'M READY.
HMM...


FUP
COME!

HE HAS INDEED MATURED.
SUCH COMPOSURE...

I'VE WAITED THREE YEARS FOR THIS MOMENT ....
FP
ULP...
.....

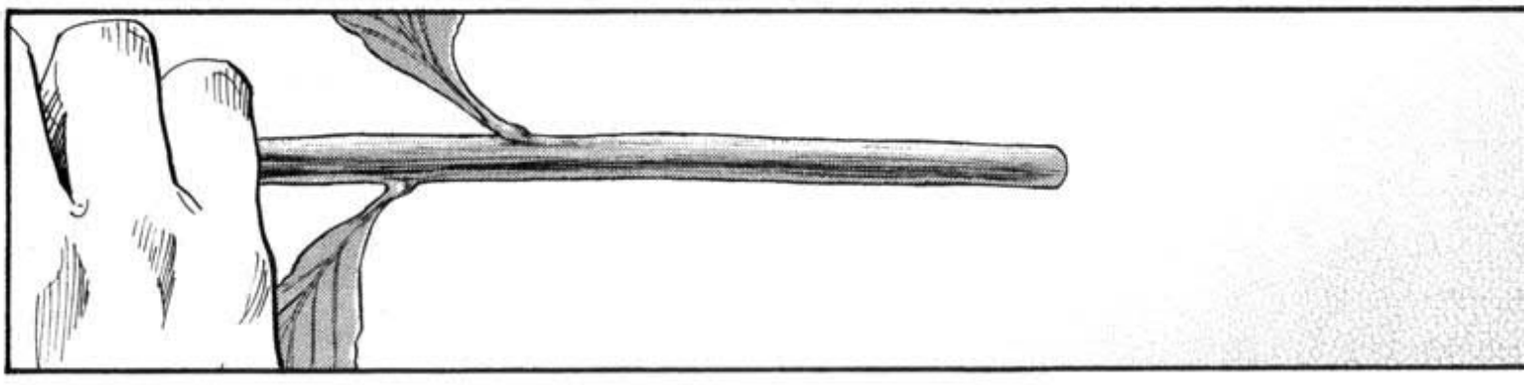
GASP!
FWOOSH
YAHHH!!



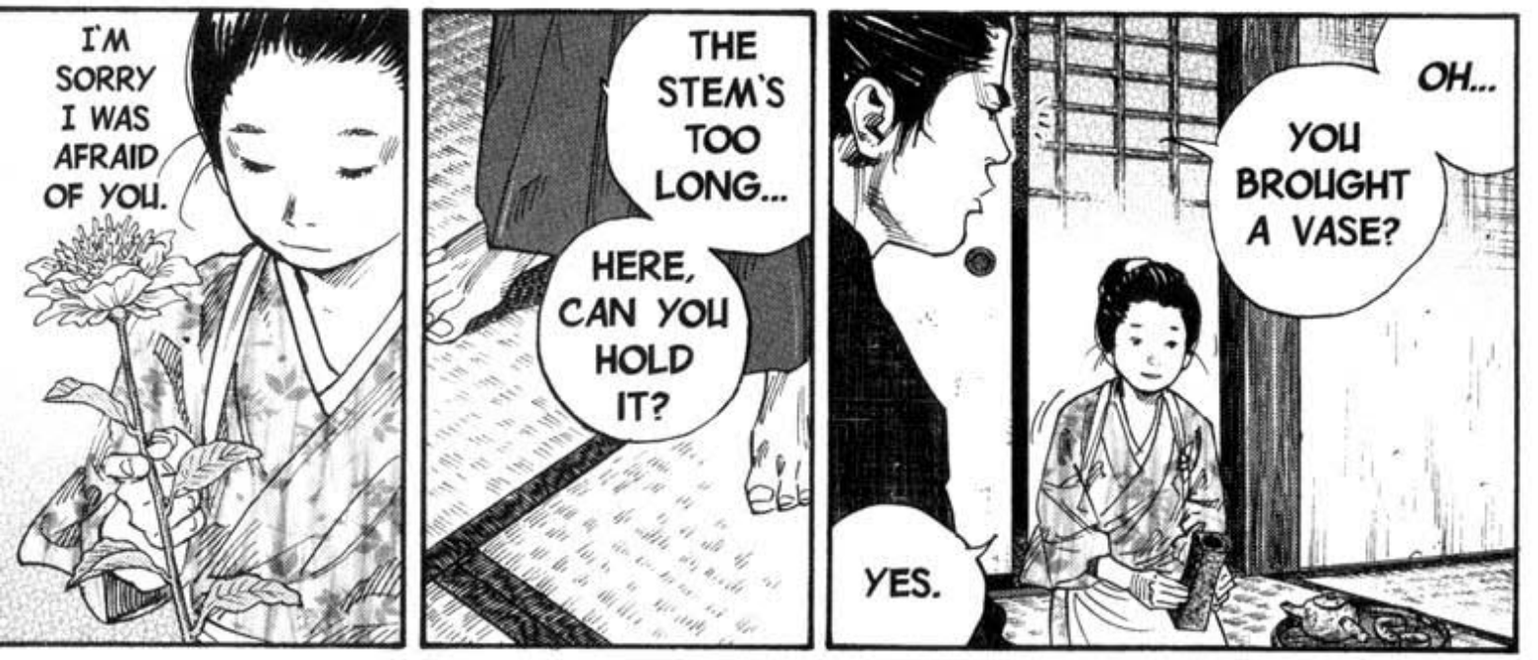
.....
KLAK
KLANK
!!
GLANCE
...
I-I'M SO SORRY!!
I'LL COME BACK WITH MORE TEA!!
KRASH
KRSH
OUCH !!
GASP!

HUH?!
HMM...
THAT FLOWER...
WHAT KIND OF FLOWER IS IT...?
OH, THIS...
A NOBLEWOMAN FROM THE CASTLE GAVE IT TO ME. IT'S A PEONY.
DO YOU LIKE... FLOWERS?
OH...
REALLY? SO DO I.
I'LL GO BRING A VASE FOR YOU...
YES, I DO.

I STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO...
"SUCH CLUMSY BLOOD-THIRST..."



MAYBE HE'S NOT SUCH A BAD MAN...
.....
FMMM
.....


I'M SORRY I WAS AFRAID OF YOU.
THE STEM'S TOO LONG...
HERE, CAN YOU HOLD IT?
OH...
YOU BROUGHT A VASE?
YES.

GLIMMER

SLISH
Tp Tp Tp Tp
KYAA!!!
.....
FB

HMM...
NNGH
.....

HE'S EVEN STRONGER THAN HE WAS BEFORE.

I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING AGAINST HIM.

THROB
BUT THEREIN LIES THE CHALLENGE!!
NNGH!!

NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRAIN...
...THE YOUNG MASTER GETS INCREMENT-ALLY STRONGER.

IT'S IN HIS BLOOD...
.....

HE TRULY IS...
...THE RIGHTFUL HEIR TO THE YAGYŪ LEGACY...

...SUCCESSOR TO THE INVINCIBLE...

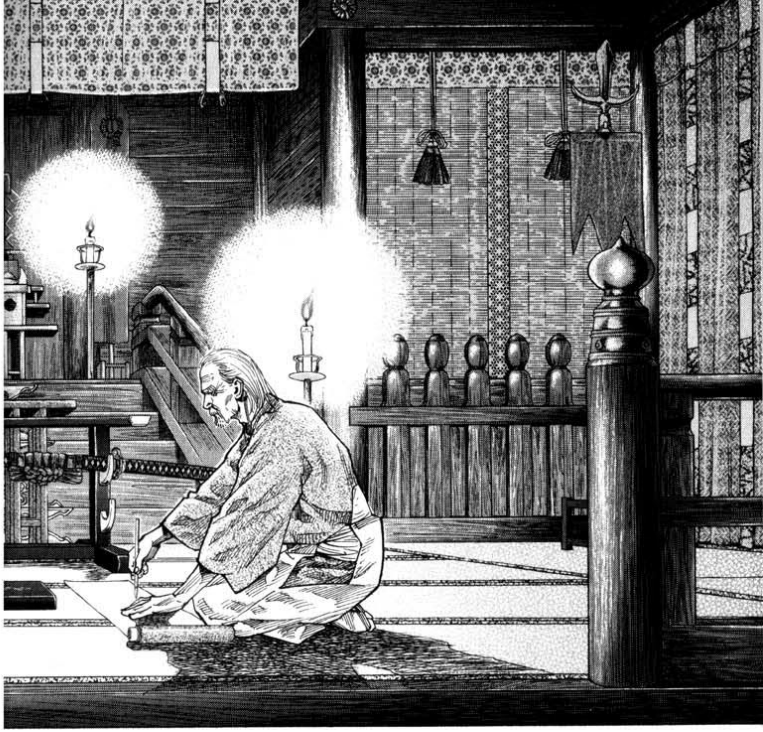
HYŌGONOSUKE...
YES, SIR!!

Vagabond

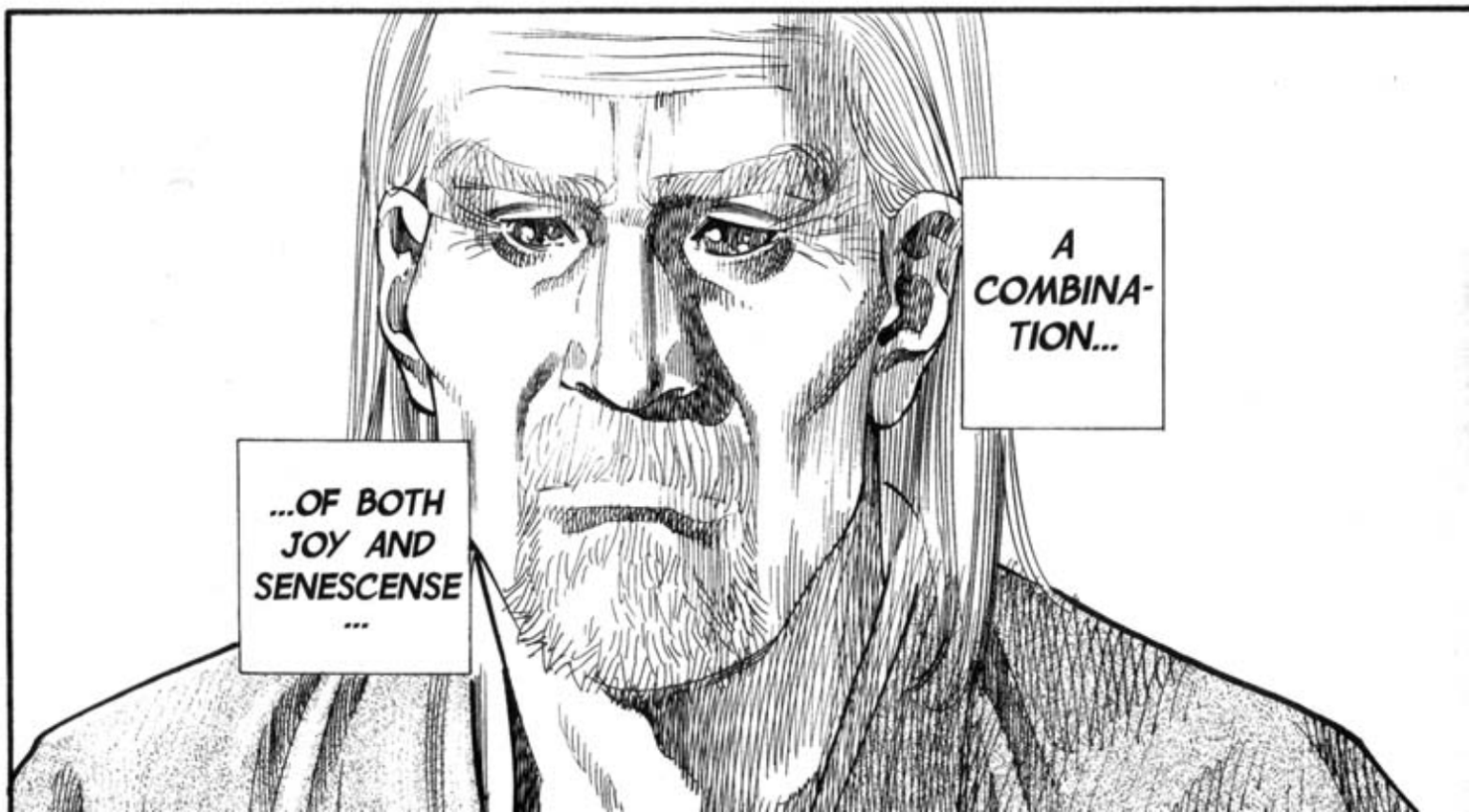
新陰流正統の証
柳生の大太刀

(PROOF OF THE LEGITIMATE SHINKAGE RYU STYLE OF SWORDSMANSHIP—THE YAGYU LONGSWORD.)

#83 Legacy



ON THIS DAY, YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...
...PASSED ON ALL OF THE SECRETS OF THE SHINKAGE STYLE TO HIS GRANDSON HYŌGONOSUKE.

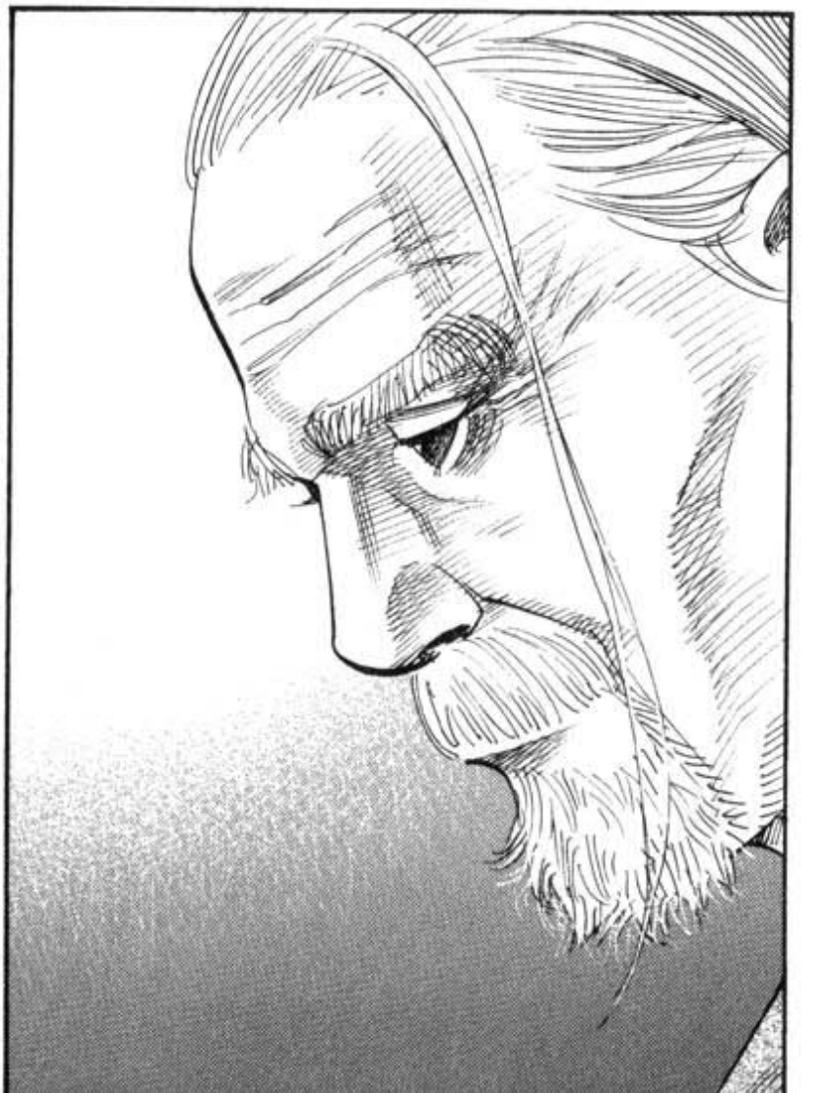

A COMBINA-TION...
...OF BOTH JOY AND SENESCENSE ...

IT HAS BEEN OVER 40 YEARS SINCE I INHERITED THE SHINKAGE STYLE DERIVED FROM THE KAMI'IZUMI STYLE.
I WORKED LONG AND HARD...
...WERE EVIDENT AS HIS TREMBLING HANDS BRUSHED THE FINAL CHARACTERS...
...AND IN TIME...
...I WAS ABLE TO MASTER IT-- APPROACHING HEAVEN AND EARTH.

SHOULD I PASS AWAY, IT STILL LIVES ON, HERE.
.....!!

FWOM

GRAND-FATHER...
MASTER KAMI'IZUMI HAD A VERY PEACEFUL LOOKING FACE, DIDN'T HE?



HOW DO YOU KNOW?

DON'
I SEE HIM STANDING THERE BESIDE YOU.

DON

DON

DODON

WHAT IS THAT?

DON
AN IMPROVISATION...
AN IMPROVISATION OF JOY.
DODON

DON
WHAT'S GOING ON... AT THIS HOUR?

DODON
DON

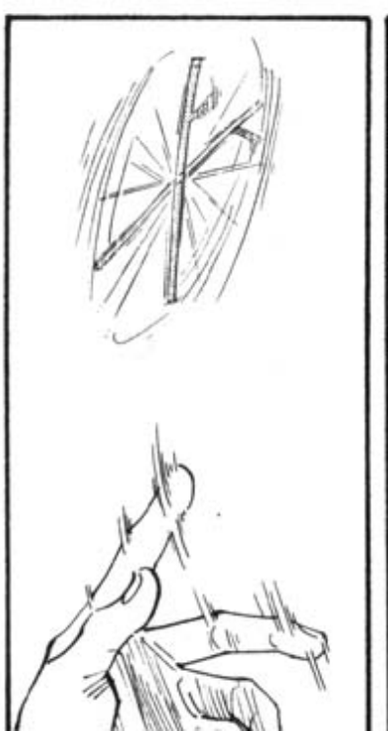
.....

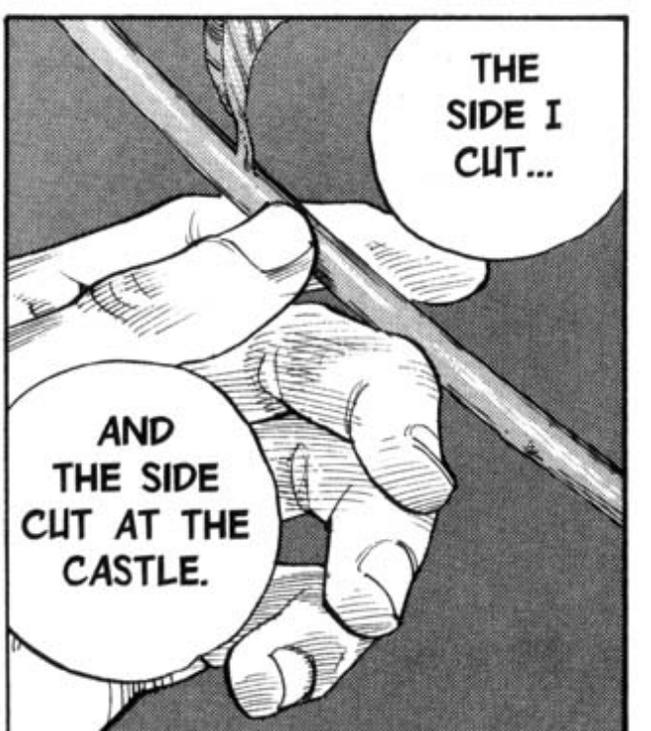
MUST BE THE MASTER...

DODON
DON
.....

HMM...
IT'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

FWIP




THE SIDE I CUT...
AND THE SIDE CUT AT THE CASTLE.

HMM...

I CUT THIS SIDE.

OH MY! IT'S YOU!

I TOLD THE GATE KEEPER THAT I WAS YOUR BROTHER AND THEY LET ME IN.
THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME AT FIRST CAUSE I MADE A MISTAKE AND CALLED YOU OTSŪRU...
SEE, THEY'RE STILL SUSPICIOUS.
HEH HEH HEH!
JŌTARŌ, HOW DID YOU GET INTO THE CASTLE!?
IT'S OKAY!
HER BROTHER?
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, OTSŪ?
I-I'M OTSŪ'S LITTLE BROTHER!
REALLY?
THIS FILTHY BRAT?
WELL...
GASP!
HEY, KID! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?!
!!
GRR

...TO DELIVER THIS MESSAGE!!
BUT I WAS SENT HERE BY MY MASTER...

.....
OOPS, SORRY!

YES...
SO HE'S LYING ABOUT BEING YOUR BROTHER.
HEY!!

.....

I WON'T BOTHER TO READ HIS LETTER.
WHAT--?!

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR MASTER, EH?
HE MUST BE AN ERRANT SAMURAI POLISHING HIS SKILLS.

"I WOULD LIKE TO VISIT THE DOJO OF THE YAGYŪ."
"I SEEK THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE YOUR SWORDS-MANSHIP."
"AS A FELLOW ASPIRANT FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE SWORD, WON'T YOU PLEASE GRANT MY REQUEST FOR A LESSON?"
THEY'RE ALL THE SAME...

WHAT--?!
NO, I DON'T.

MY MASTER ISN'T LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE!

COUNTLESS NUMBERS OF MEN WHO FANCY THEMSELVES SAMURAI IN TRAINING COME HERE WITH THE SAME REQUEST.
BUT WE JUST CAN'T BE BOTHERED WITH THEIR LIKE. YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?

IF YOU WON'T READ HIS MESSAGE, THEN CUT ME DOWN!!
KRICH

HMM...

JŌTARŌ ...
I CAN'T RETURN TO HIM WITHOUT FULFILLING MY TASK!!
CUT ME DOWN IF YOU WON'T READ IT!!

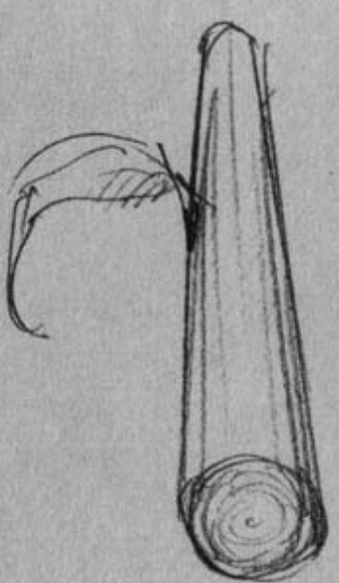
YOU MUST TREASURE LIFE.
DO YOU UNDER-STAND?
JŌTARŌ, REMEMBER THIS...
ALL RIGHT, GIVE IT HERE...
...!
MURATA ...
WE'VE RECEIVED A MOST PECULIAR MESSAGE...
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

SEE THIS...?

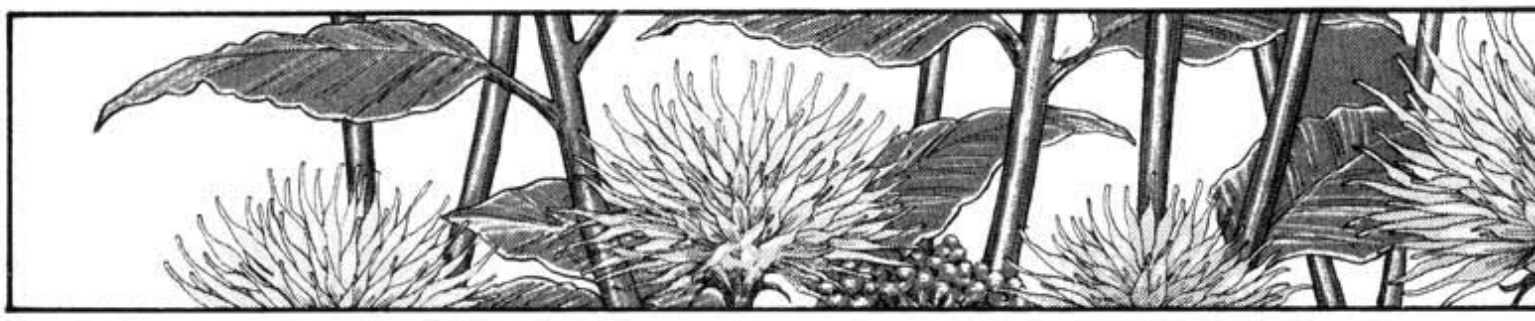
HMM? WHAT'S THAT?

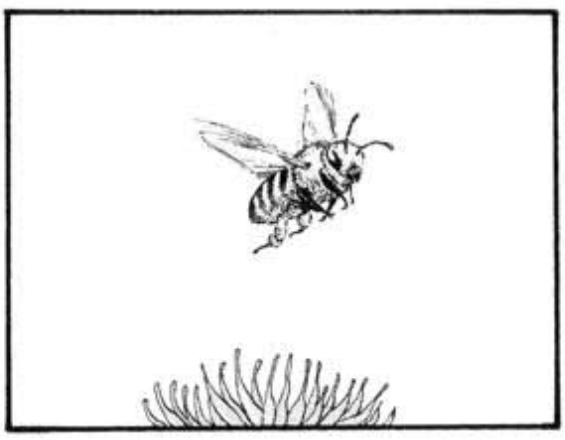
I'M STARVING.
I HOPE MY MASTER DOESN'T EAT LUNCH BEFORE I GET BACK...
WHAT'S TAKING SO LONG ?!

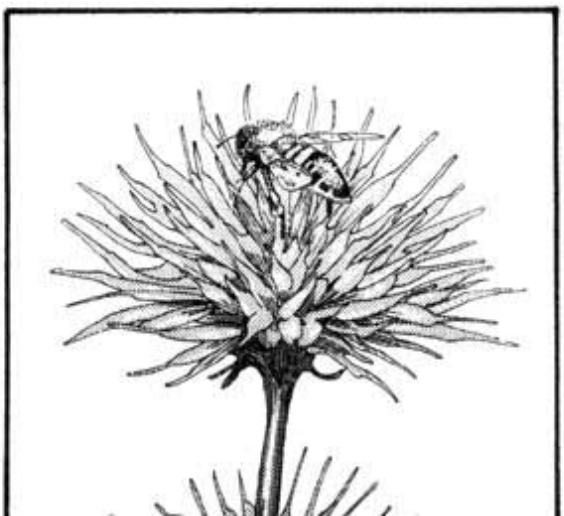
Vagabond

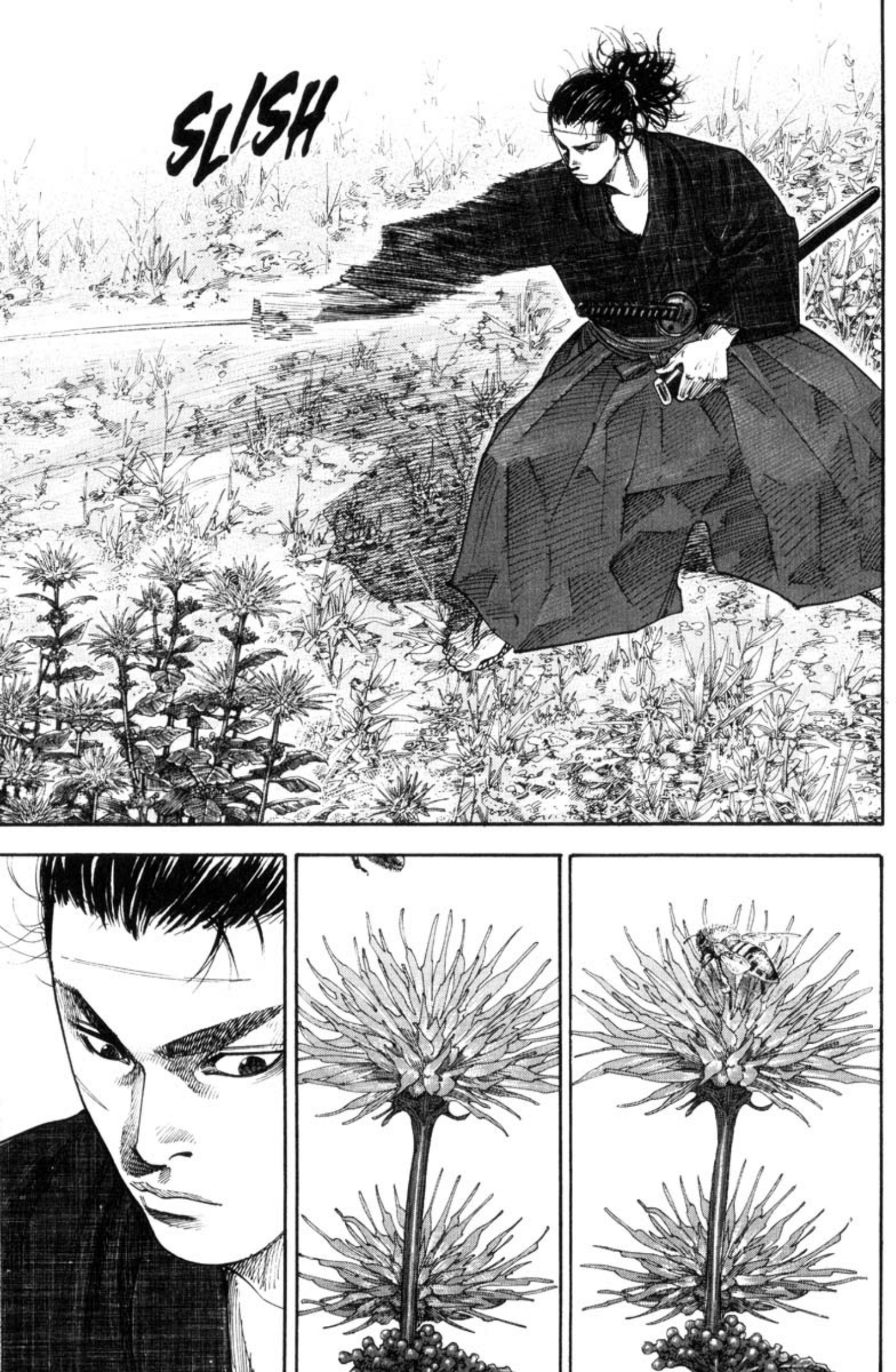


#84 Promise








SLISH

.....

FSH

IT'S NOT THE SAME...

THAT MEANS...

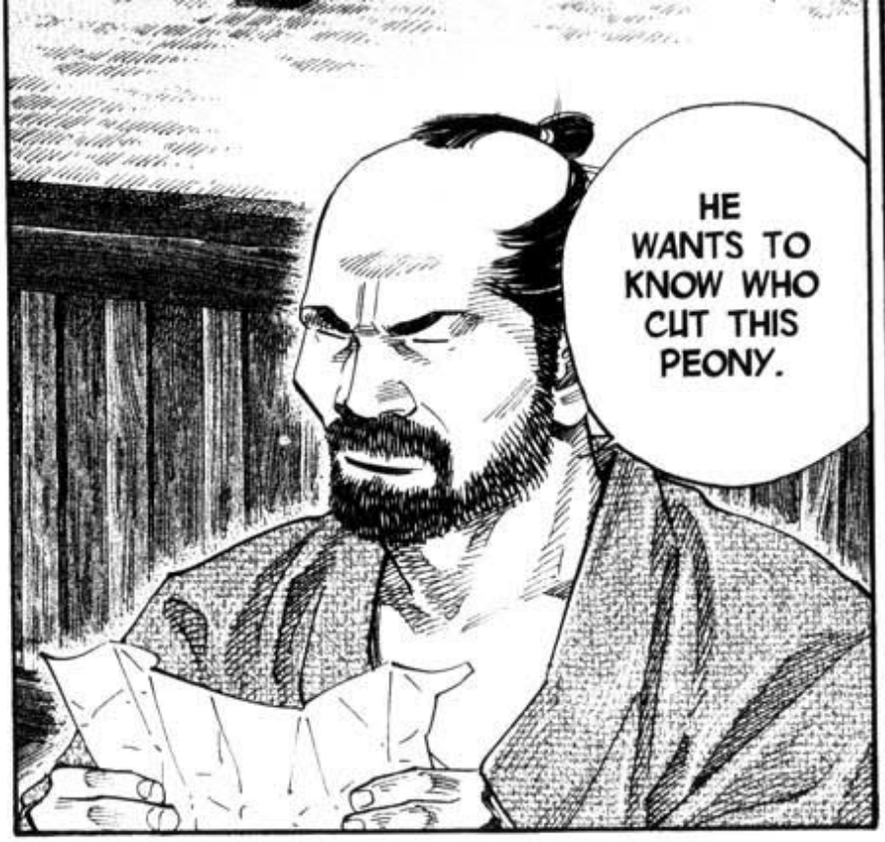
...SOMEONE FROM THE CASTLE CUT THE FLOWER.

A NOBLE-WOMAN FROM THE CASTLE GAVE IT TO ME. IT'S A PEONY.

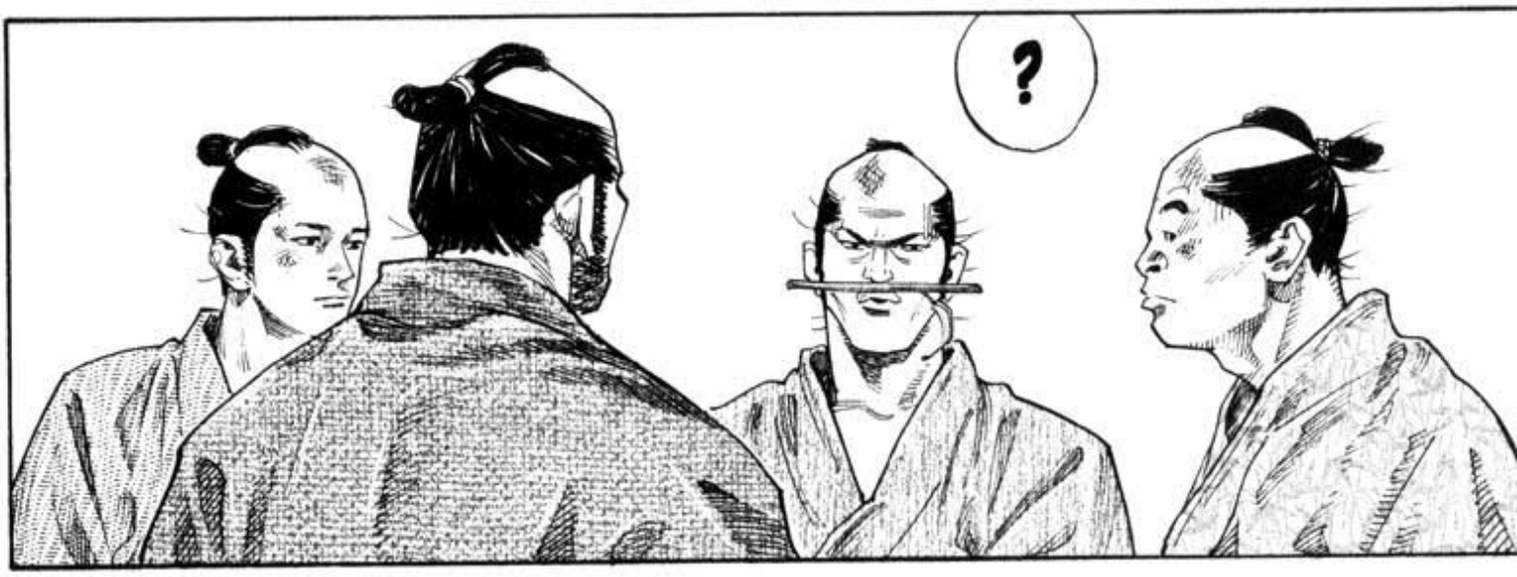
WHO COULD IT HAVE BEEN...?

I DOUBT A NOBLEWOMAN COULD MAKE A CUT LIKE THAT...

EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN CUT, THE FLOWER REMAINS VIBRANT--AS IF IT'S STILL ALIVE.
.....
IT'S NOT THE SAME...
MY CUT IS DESTROYING THE FLOWER.
THE CUT ON THAT PEONY IS DIFFERENT.
HMM...
...?


HE WANTS TO KNOW WHO CUT THIS PEONY.

WHAT DOES THE LETTER SAY?
THAT'S WHAT IS SO UNUSUAL...


?

WHICH SIDE?
I DON'T KNOW.

JUST "I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHO MADE THIS MAGNIFICENT CUT."
"MAG-NIFICENT CUT?"

I FIGURED IT WAS THE USUAL-- A SAMURAI IN TRAINING SEEKING A MATCH...
...BUT HE DOESN'T EVEN MENTION THAT.

....?
HMM... CAN YOU TELL?
THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE TWO CUTS?
.....
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I THOUGHT...
THROW THAT STEM OUT.
HAH! THESE FELLOWS ARE SO DESPERATE THEY'RE COMING UP WITH SOME CREATIVE WAYS TO APPROACH US.
!!!!!
...UNTIL OTSŪ TOLD ME THAT MASTER YAGYŪ CUT THAT FLOWER.

MIYAMOTO MUSASHI...
HAVE YOU HEARD OF HIM?
.....
WHAT'S THIS RONIN'S NAME?
I HAVE...
HE FARED WELL...
...AGAINST THE YOSHIOKA OF KYOTO AND AGAINST INSHUN OF HŌZŌIN.
HE WAS A FAIR MATCH AGAINST INSHUN...?
I'D LIKE TO MEET HIM.
YES!!

HOW HARD COULD IT BE TO COME UP WITH A REPLY?
WHAT'S TAKING THEM SO LONG?
HEY, DOG!
COME HERE.
HMM...
RUSTLE RUSTLE
C'MON. SHOW SOME SPIRIT!
SHOULDER TOSS!
YAH!
EAR HOLD MOVE!
GASP!
C'MON, LET'S WRESTLE!
YOU'RE BIG.
YAH!

ARF
ARF
GRRR

GRRR
HUH?

HEY!
HOW DARE YOU?

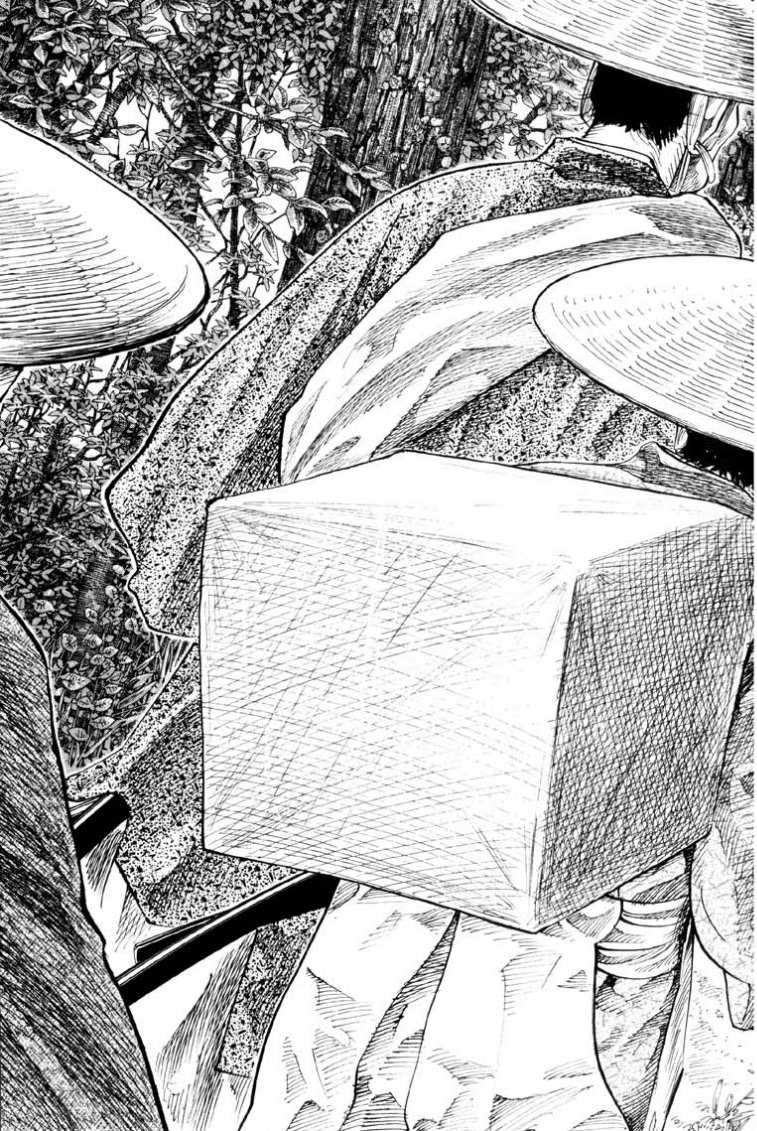
LET'S GO.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE--?

GASP!

MY VISIT TO THE YAGYŪ TURNED OUT FRUITLESS.
THANKS FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY.
PLEASE TAKE CARE, SIR.

I WONDER HOW MIYAMOTO MUSASHI IS FARING WITH HIS TRAINING...



MIYAMOTO...

I'D COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ABOUT HIM!!
YOSHIOKA DENSHICHIRŌ...
!

TAKE IT EASY, YOU FOOLS!!
FWICH
FWICH

.....
SELLING FLOWERS NOW, ARE YOU?
SO YOU CAME TO SEE THE YAGYŪ TOO...
THERE'S NOTHING HERE FOR YOU.
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME. THEY WON'T GRANT YOU AN AUDIENCE.
IS THAT SO?
...
YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN YOUR PROMISE, HAVE YOU?
OF COURSE NOT.

EARLY NEXT SPRING...
...I'LL SEE YOU BACK IN KYOTO!!

FAREWELL !!
SHUF
SHUF
YOSHIOKA...

NO, THANK YOU!!

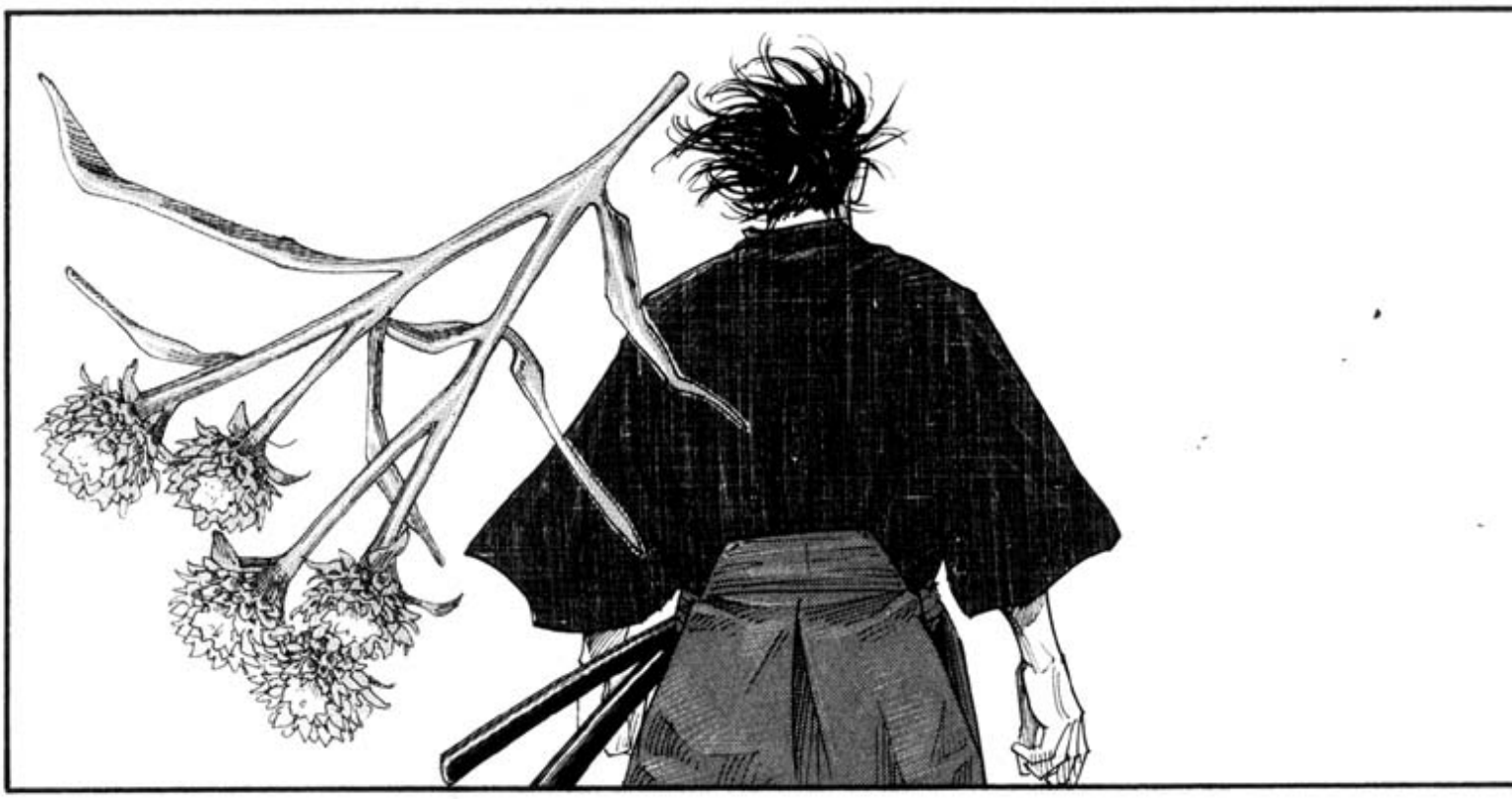
HMPH

HERE'S A GIFT FOR YOUR JOURNEY HOME.

FWIP
SLISH

SHUF
HMPH!
DO YOU THINK I'M A MAN WITH A PREDILECTION FOR FLOWERS?
SHUF
FP
.....
...YOSHIOKA DENSHICHIRŌ.
IT'S LIMP AND LIFELESS...

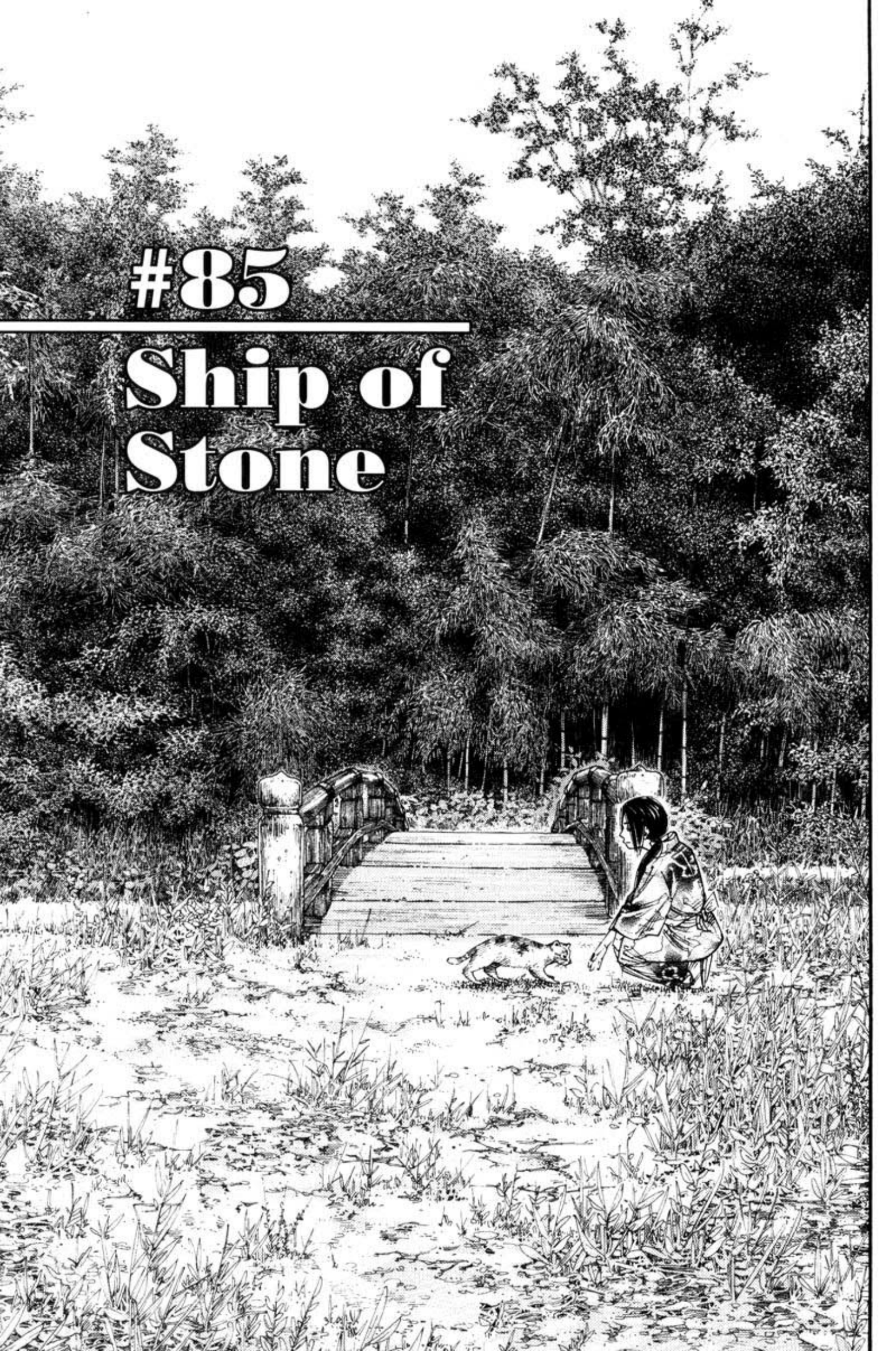
...!?



KYAAA!
DRIP
DRIP
I'M BACK.

Vagabond

(CARE YOU OKAY?)
(SNIF. YES... THANK YOU.)


#85
Ship of Stone

WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW, HYŌGONOSUKE?
FWF
FWF

NOW THAT YOU HAVE LEFT KATO KIYOMASA'S HIGO...
...I HEAR THAT ALL THE LORDS THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCES ARE AFTER YOU.

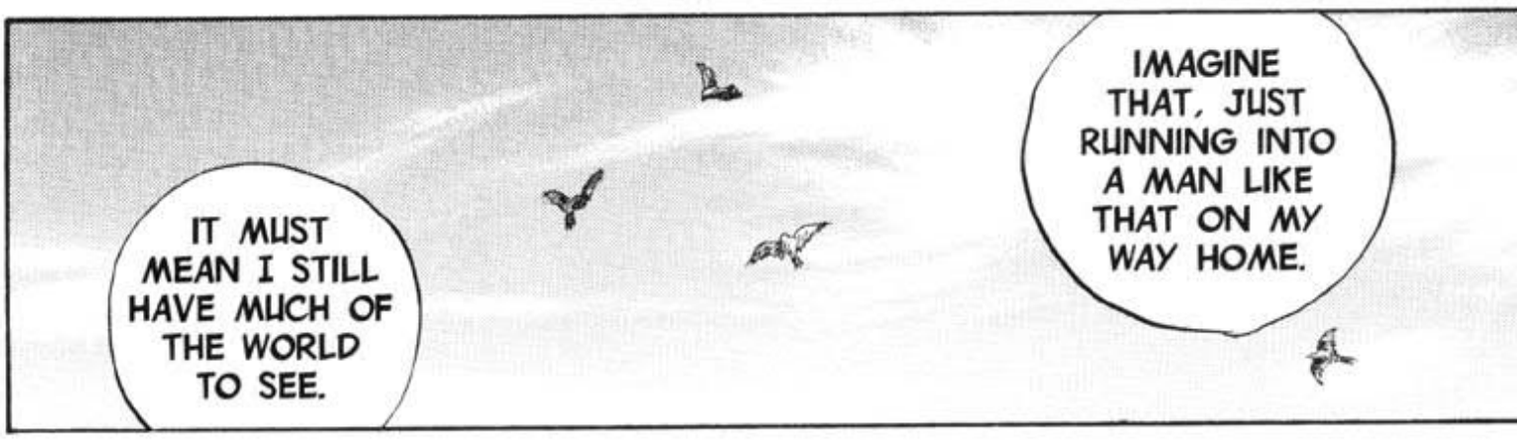
ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING ONE OF THEM?
IS THAT SO...?

NO.
I'LL CONTINUE TO TRAVEL THE LAND IN ORDER TO IMPROVE MYSELF.

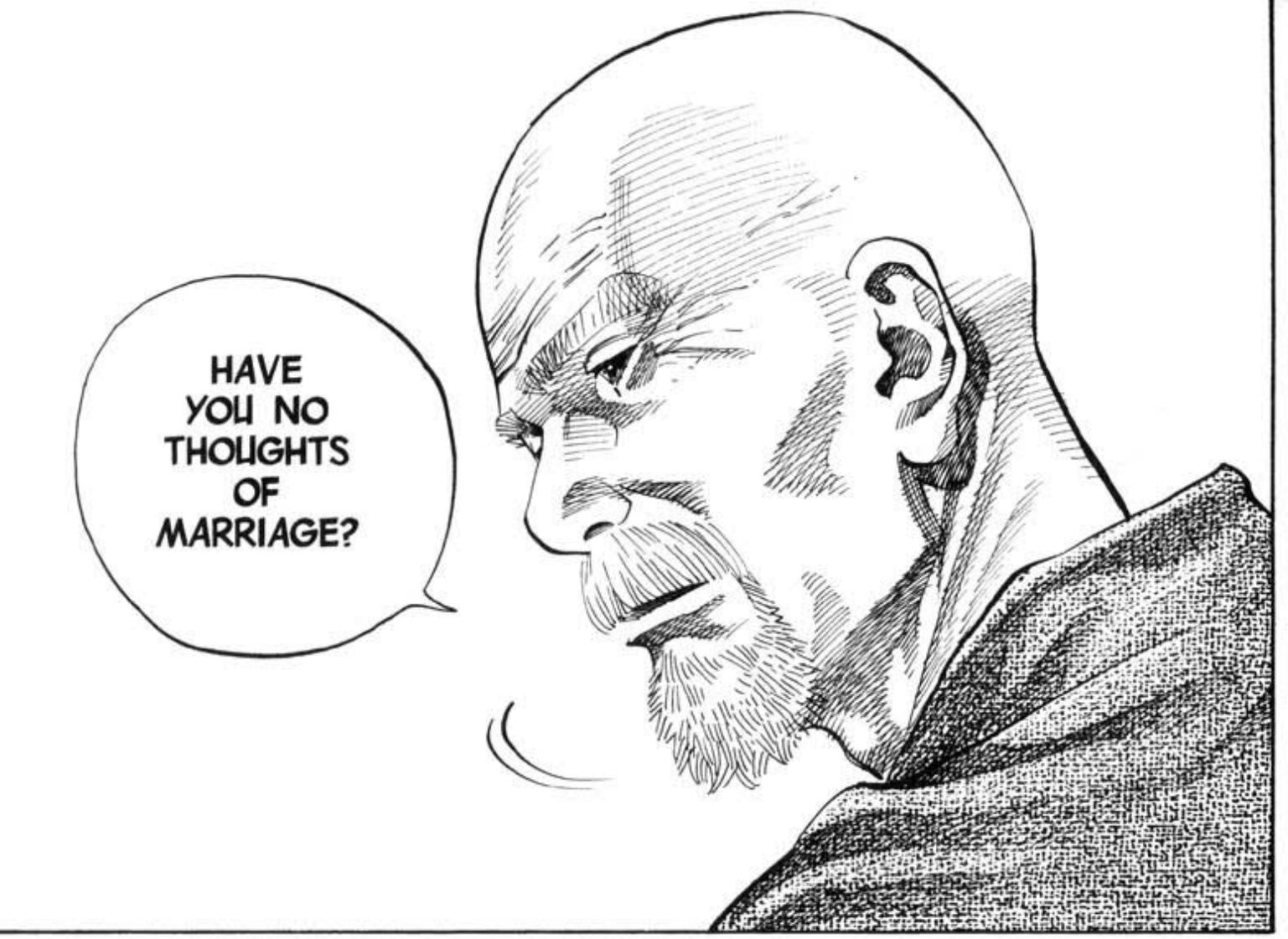
GRANDFATHER, SPEAKING OF WARRIOR PILGRIMS...
I RAN INTO QUITE AN INTERESTING FELLOW...

I SEE.
YOU'LL CONTINUE THE MUSHA SHUGYO, THE WARRIOR'S PILGRIMAGE...
SO MANY THESE DAYS ARE JUST LAZY PARASITES AND CHARLATANS.

DID HE SHOW UP HERE?
I'VE INSTRUCTED MY MEN TO TURN AWAY ALL WANDERING SAMURAI.
I WOULDN'T KNOW.
HE NEVER LET HIS GUARD DOWN...
NOT ONE FALSE MOVE.
HE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN OLDER THAN TWENTY.
BUT I DID NOT GET HIS NAME.


IMAGINE THAT, JUST RUNNING INTO A MAN LIKE THAT ON MY WAY HOME.
IT MUST MEAN I STILL HAVE MUCH OF THE WORLD TO SEE.

FSH
FSH
.....
GRANDFATHER ...
...I MUST CONTINUE MY TRAINING PILGRIMAGE!!
FWIP


HAVE YOU NO THOUGHTS OF MARRIAGE?

MI THE STRAY CAT IS PREGNANT.
MASTER...
...I DO NOT.
NO...

LOOK!!

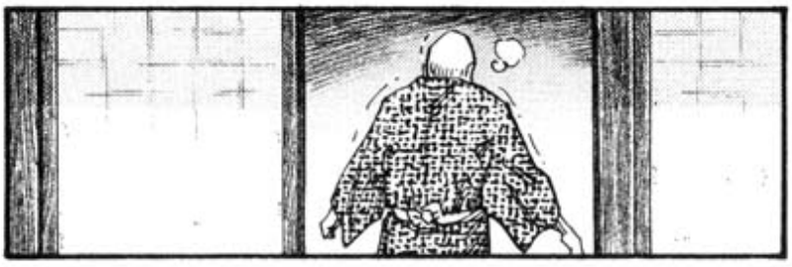
OH...

OH, NO... YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING AFTER ME.
THIS IS MY GRANDSON, HYŌGONO-SUKE.

THIS IS OTSŪ. SHE'S BEEN LOOKING AFTER ME.

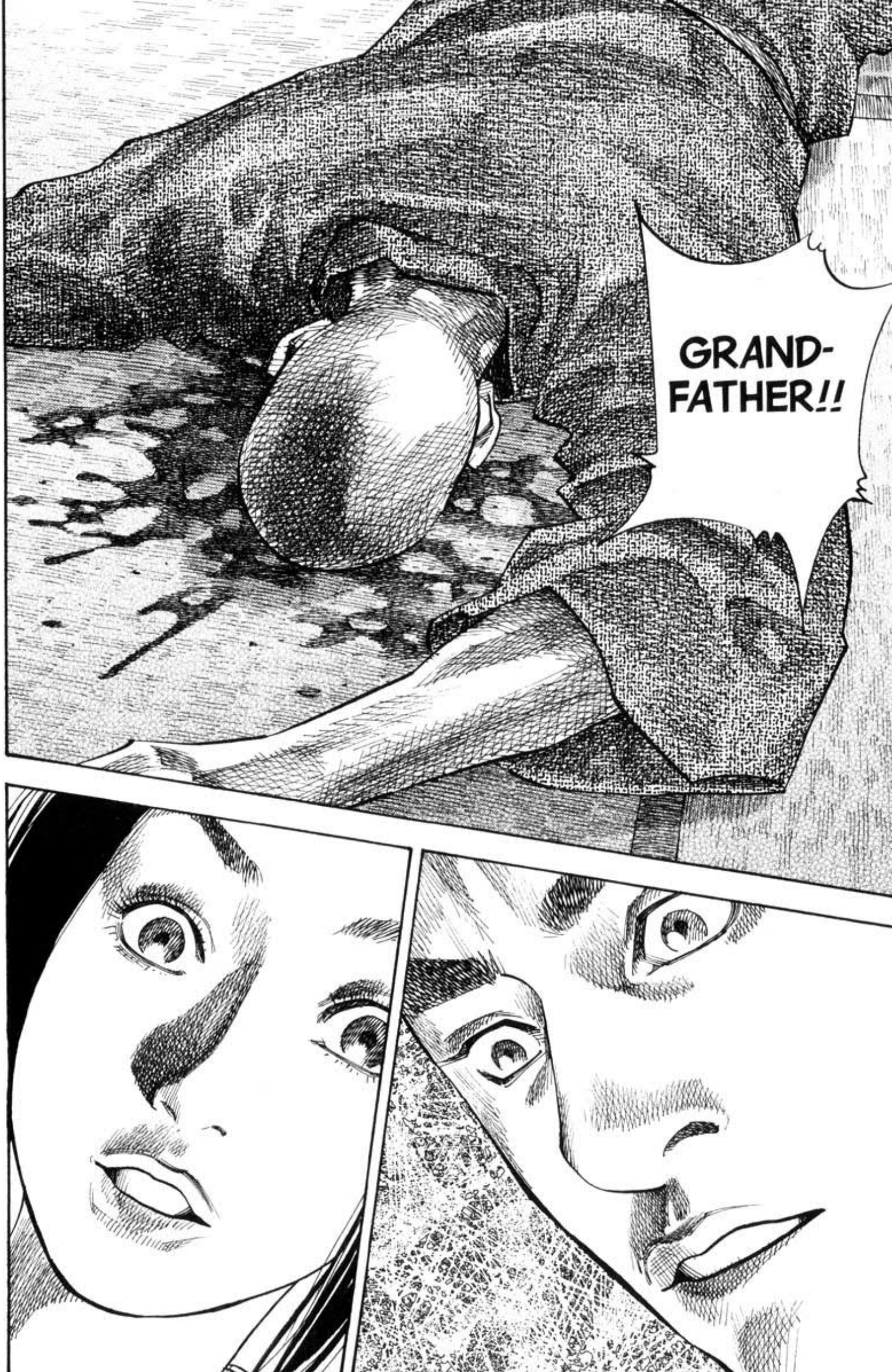
HAH!

WHAT HAPPENED? YOU'RE BALD.

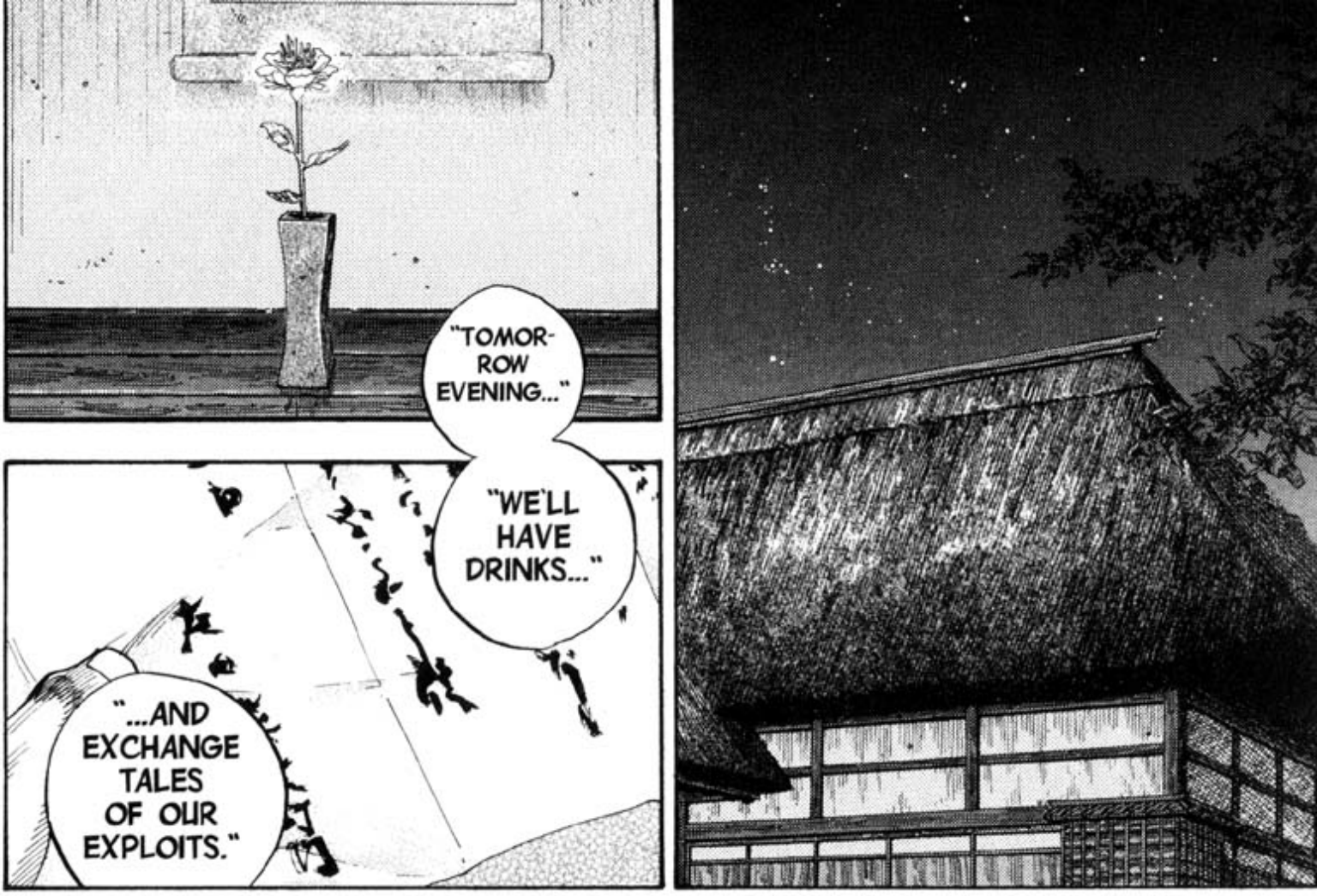


...SO YOU'RE HYŌGONO-SUKE!
AH...
HIS PRIDE AND JOY!

HE REMINDS ME OF TAKEZŌ...
I BET THE MASTER LOOKED LIKE THIS WHEN HE WAS A YOUNG MAN.
BUT HE'S MORE LIKE HIS GRAND-FATHER...
MASTER ?!


GRAND-
FATHER!!

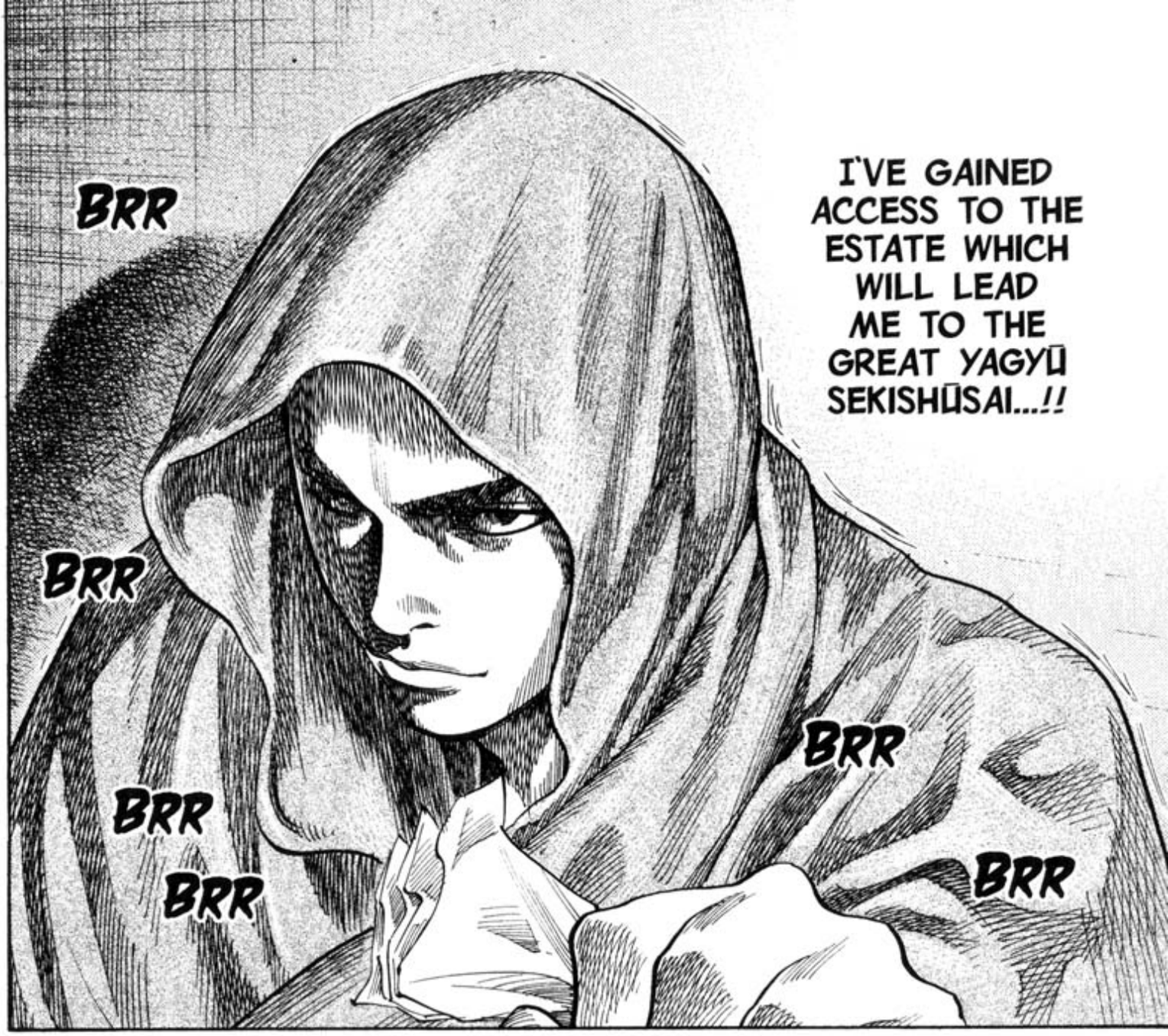
MASTER
?!

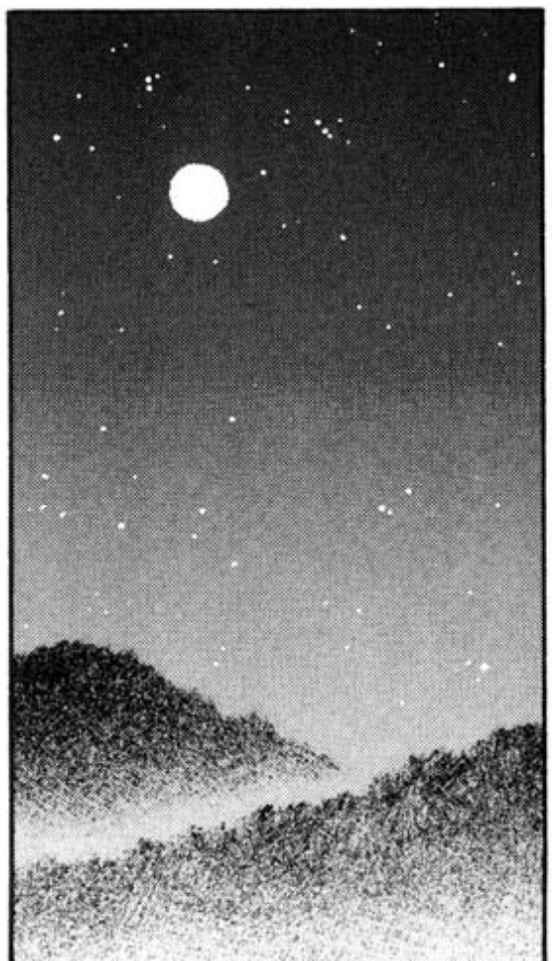

"TOMOR-
ROW
EVENING..."
"WE'LL
HAVE
DRINKS..."
"...AND
EXCHANGE
TALES
OF OUR
EXPLOITS."

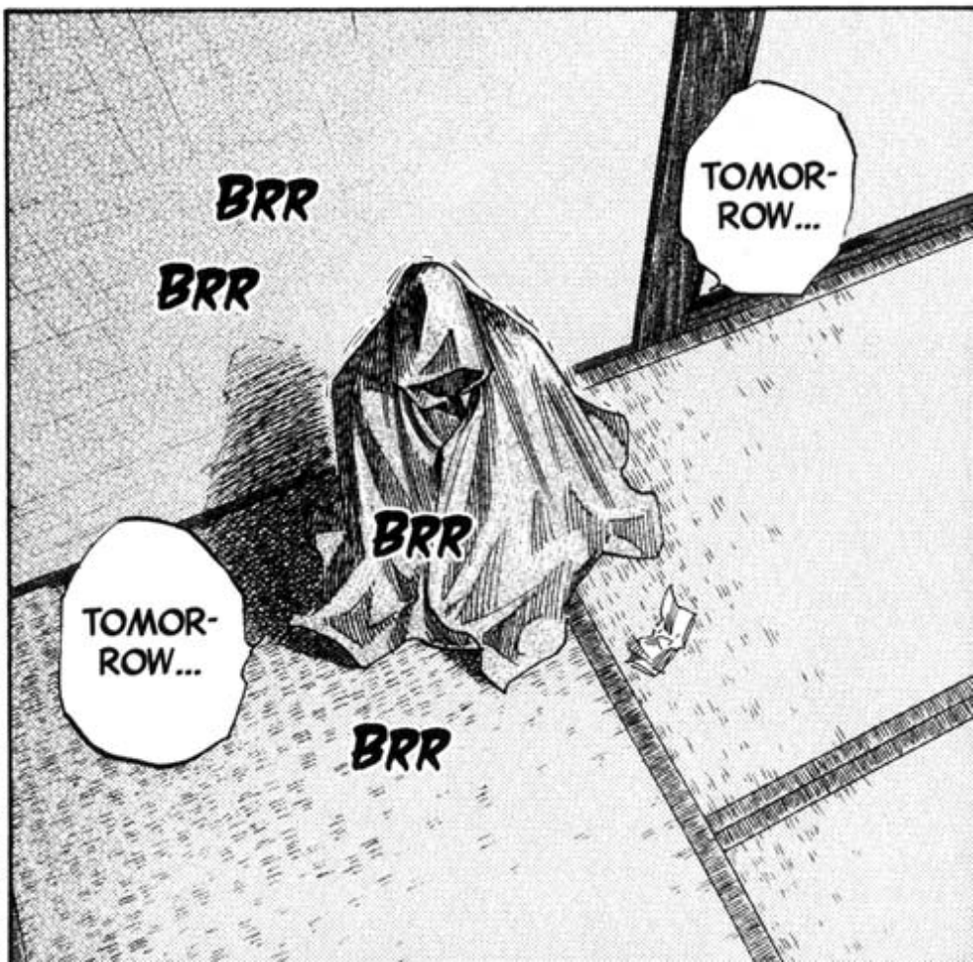
...BUT
AT THE VERY
LEAST I'LL
GAIN ENTRANCE
TO THE
ESTATE!
I DON'T
CARE TO
DO ANY
TALKING...

"EARLY
NEXT
SPRING..."
"...I'LL
SEE YOU IN
KYOTO..."

TP TP TP TP
HEY...
I NEED A BLANKET.
HMM...
"THERE'S NOTHING HERE FOR YOU..."
YOU'RE WRONG.
"YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME..."
TP TP TP TP
BRR BRR BRR
SHNOB
SORRY, ANOTHER BLANKET...


BRR
BRR
BRR
BRR
BRR
BRR
I'VE GAINED ACCESS TO THE ESTATE WHICH WILL LEAD ME TO THE GREAT YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...!!




BRR
BRR
TOMOR-ROW...
BRR
TOMOR-ROW...
BRR

IS HE IN BAD SHAPE?
CONSIDERING HIS AGE...
HMM...
HE'S RESTING FOR NOW...
BUT...
ZZZZZ
.....
THROUGHOUT MY CHILDHOOD, NO MATTER WHAT I DID, EVERYONE SAID I WAS JUST LIKE MY GRAND-FATHER...
AND WHEN I TOOK UP THE SWORD, MY STANCE, MY FORM--I WAS SAID TO BE INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM HIM.

AND IT MADE ME SO HAPPY...
I COULDN'T STOP PRACTICING...
.....

HA HA
IT WAS JUST THIS MORNING THAT HE TOLD ME...
THE MASTER IS SO PROUD OF YOU.
HE BRAGS ABOUT YOU WHENEVER HE GETS THE CHANCE.

THE SHIP OF STONE REFUSES TO COME AFLOAT!!
HA HA

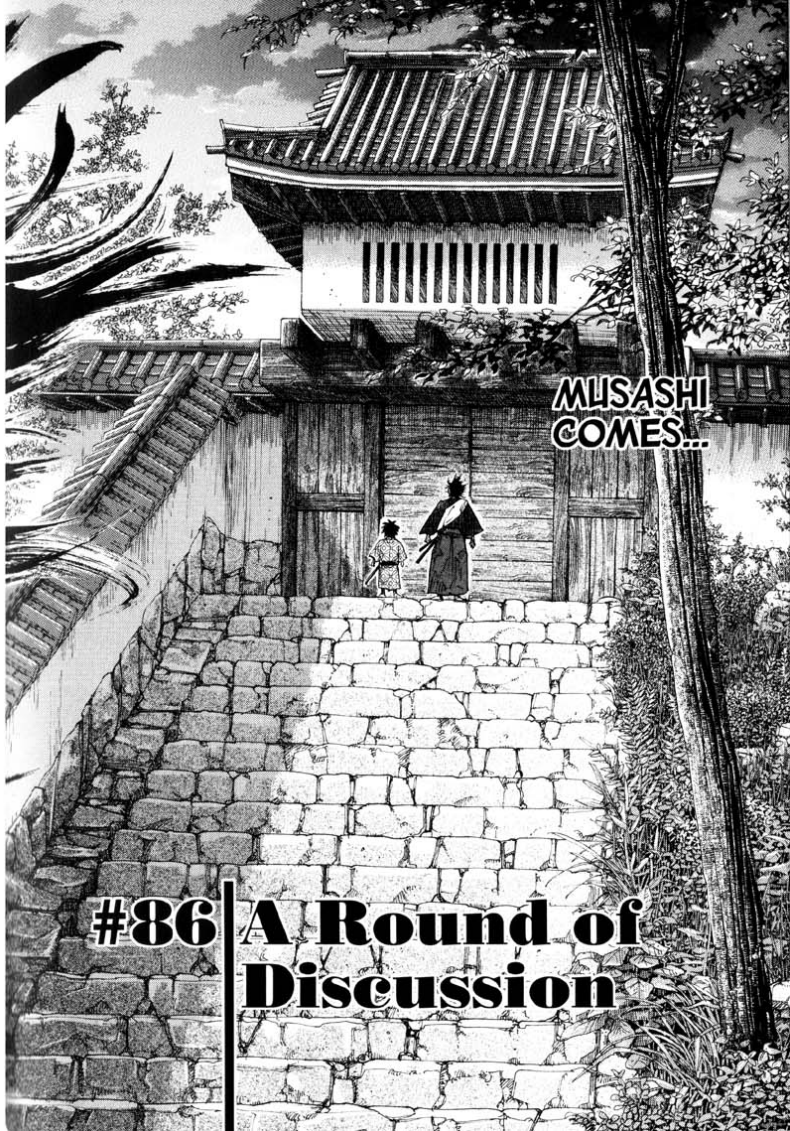
THE WORLD ABOVE SEA IS IN A CONSTANT STORM.
AND JUST AS MY NAME SEKISHŪSAI MEANS "SHIP OF STONE," I HAVE REMAINED AT THE OCEAN FLOOR...
AND SO THESE HILLS REMAIN UNTOUCHED.
...AND NOW IT SHALL BE PASSED DOWN TO THIS CLAN'S NOBLEST OF HEIRS.
IN THE CALM DEEP BELOW THE STORMY SEAS, I'VE MANAGED TO POLISH A SYSTEM OF MARTIAL ARTS...
LONG AGO, ASHIKAGA SHŌGUN MADE ME A VERY ATTRACTIVE OFFER.
HOWEVER, IF I'D SERVED WITH HIM I WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED BY ODA NOBUNAGA.
AND IF I'D TAKEN UP NOBUNAGA ON HIS OFFER...
...WHO KNOWS WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED WHEN TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI TOOK POWER.
AND HAD I HONORED HIDEYOSHI'S WISHES AND SERVED HIM...
...THE YAGYŪ FAMILY WOULD HAVE BEEN DECIMATED BY TOKUGAWA IEYASU AT THE BATTLE OF SEKIGAHARA.

I'M HONORED...

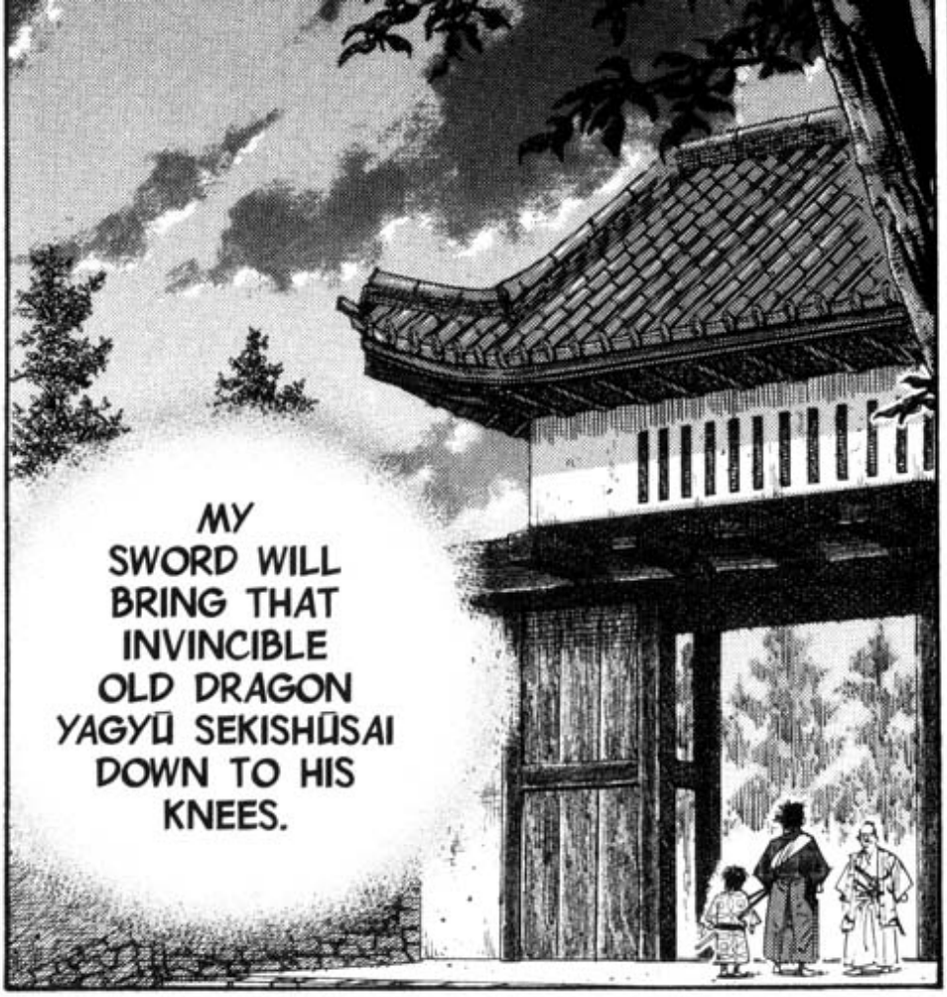
Vagabond

(ZZZ...)

THE GREAT LORD WILL NEVER SEE A WANDERING SAMURAI.
NOT EVEN THOSE WITH A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION ARE GRANTED AN AUDIENCE.
YOUR EFFORTS WILL BE FRUITLESS, SIR.
ENOUGH, WHAT DO I OWE YOU?
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
HE LEFT HERE JUST YESTERDAY.
AND EVEN YOSHIOKA DENSHICHIRŌ FROM THE DISTINGUISHED YOSHIOKA SCHOOL OF KYOTO WAS TURNED AWAY.
FICH
FICH
FICH



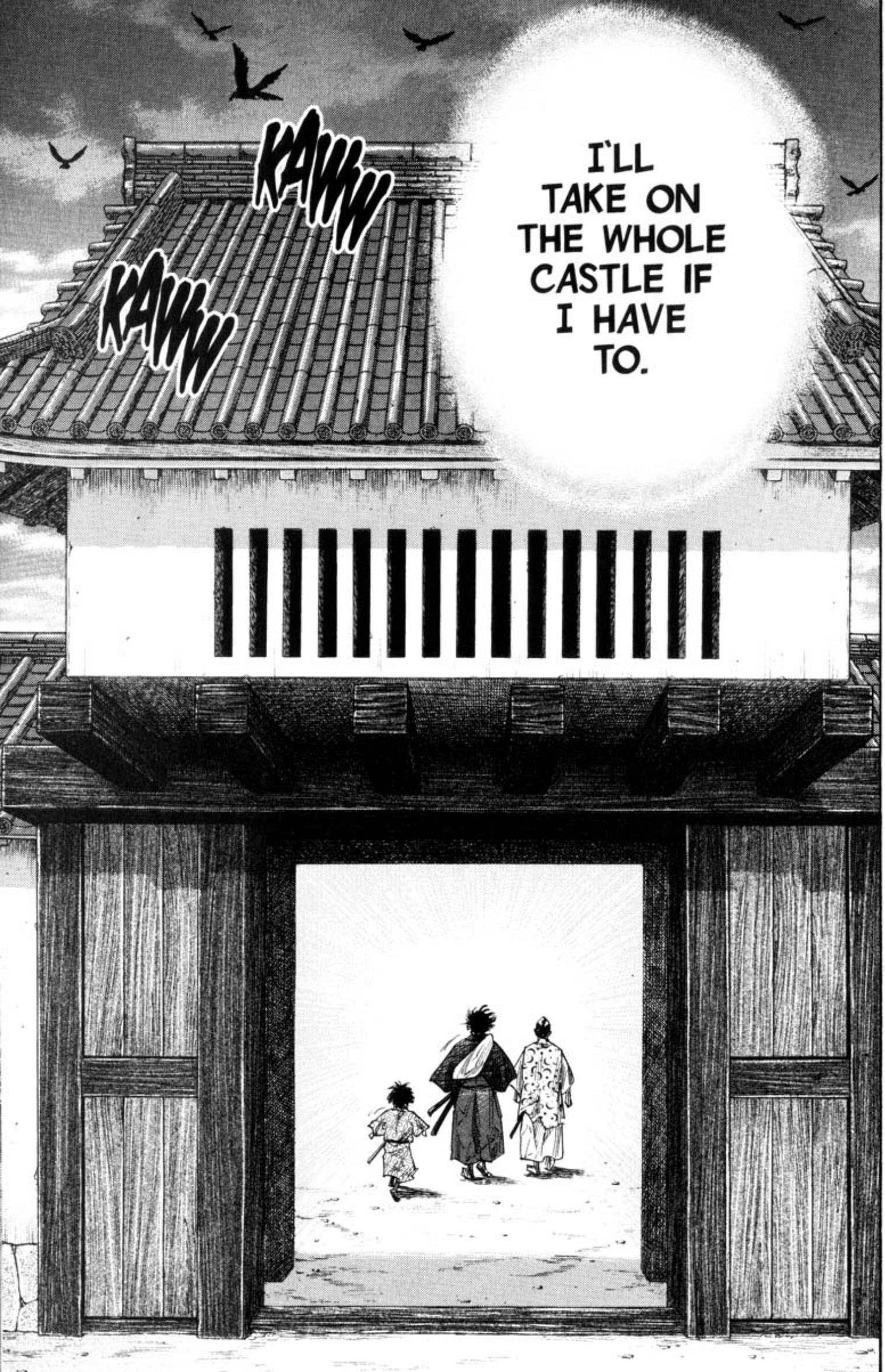
#86 A Round of Discussion

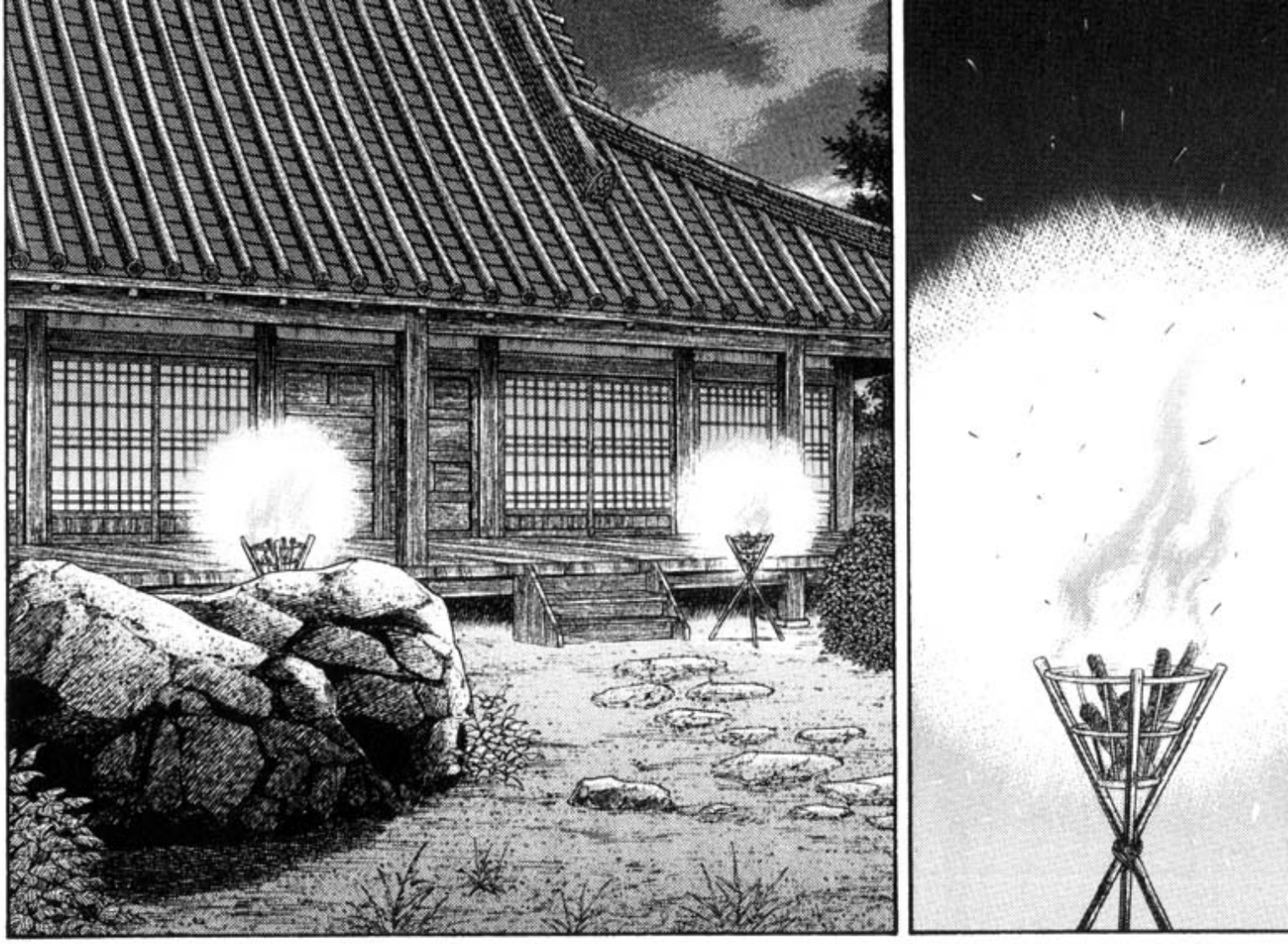

MY SWORD WILL BRING THAT INVINCIBLE OLD DRAGON YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI DOWN TO HIS KNEES.

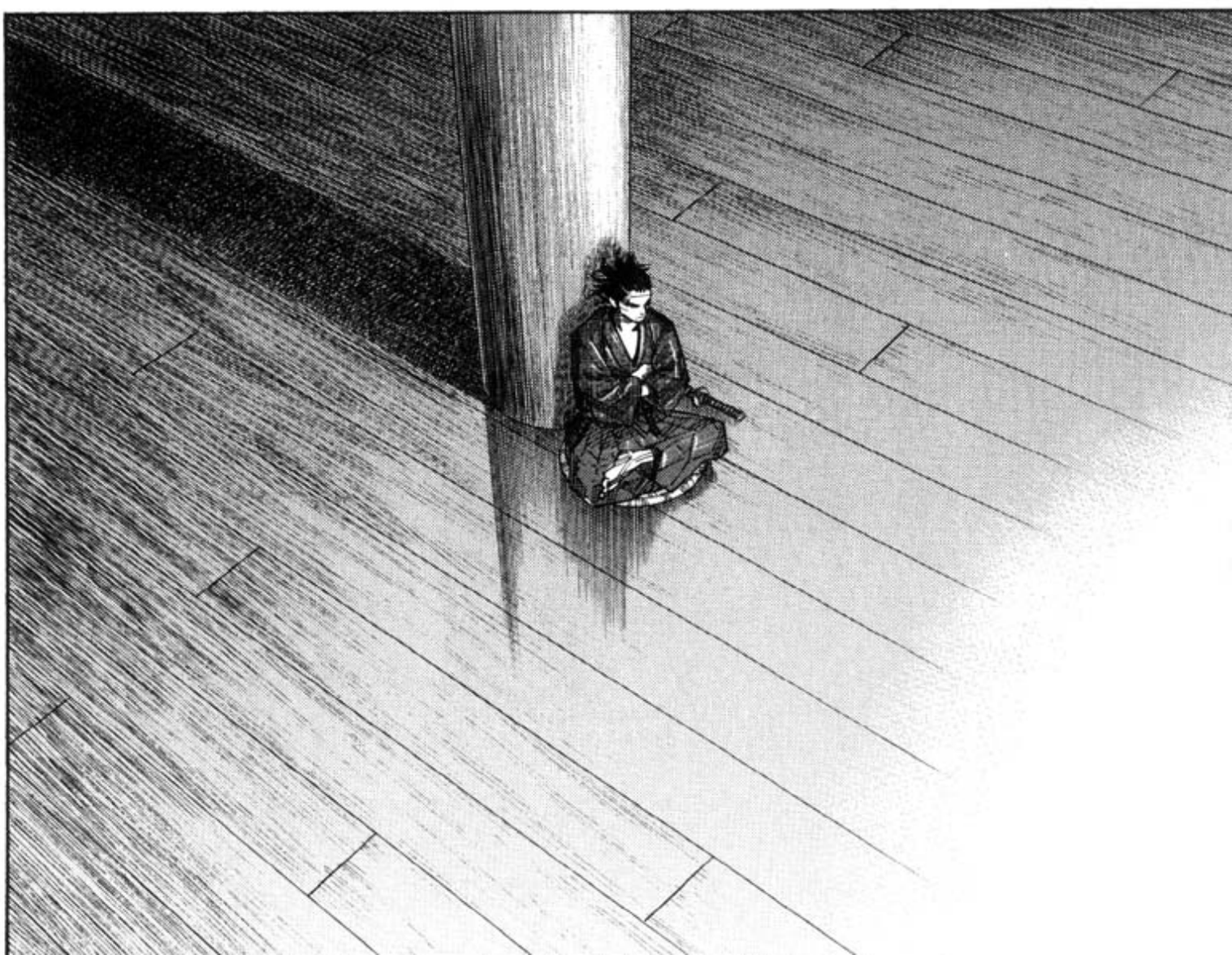
I'LL MAKE MY MARK HERE AT THE YAGYŪ CLAN...

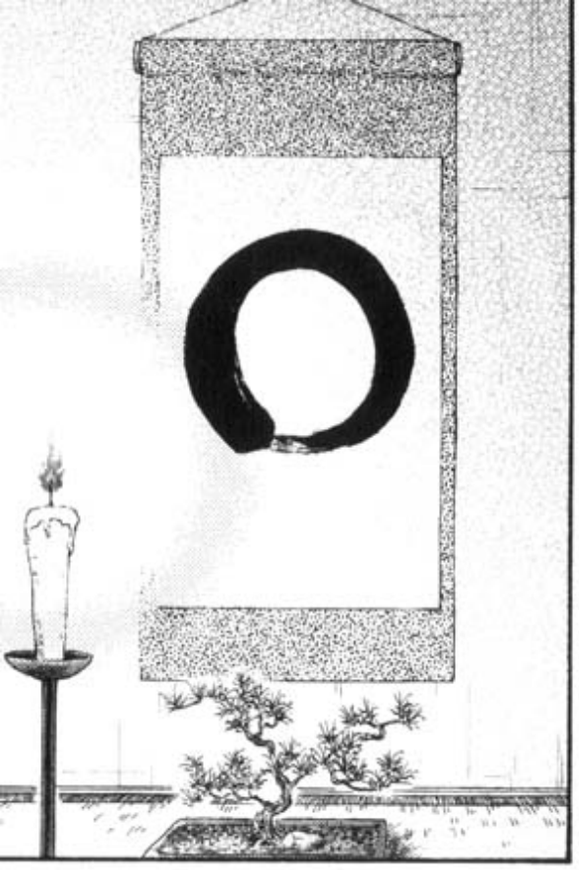
HMPH! YOU WERE RAISED TO BE TOO POLITE AND PROPER.
"YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME. THEY WON'T GRANT YOU AN AUDIENCE."

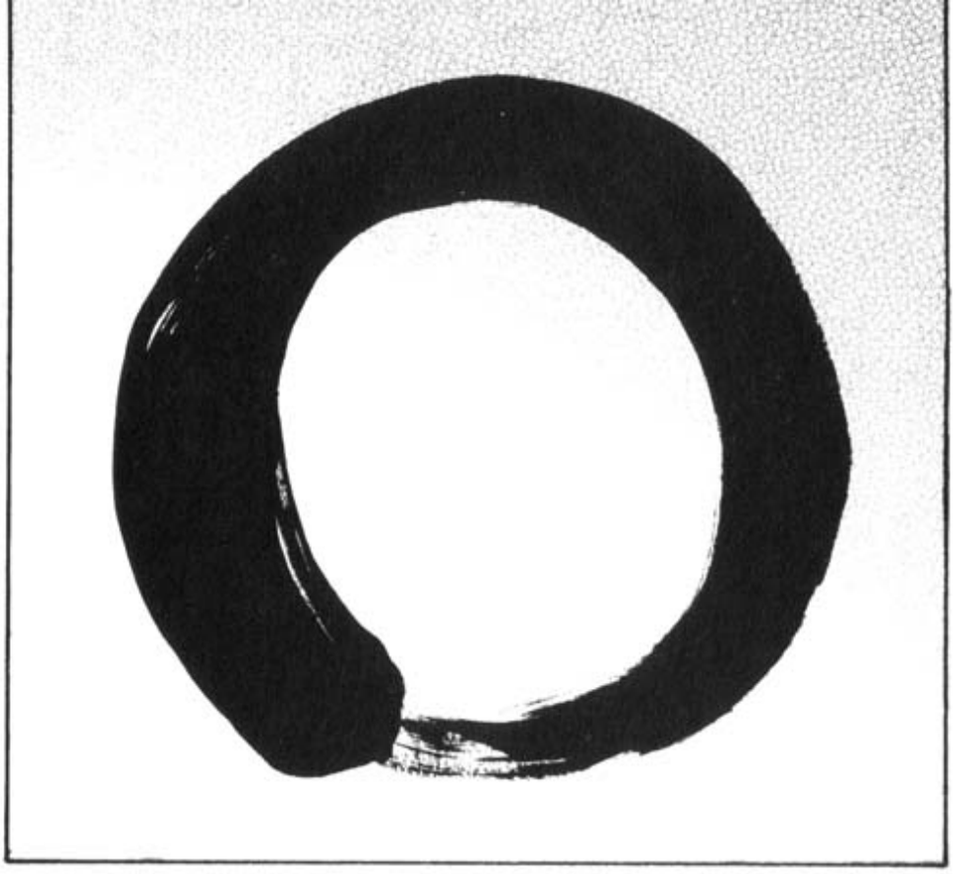
IF I'M REFUSED THEN I'LL JUST HAVE TO FIGHT.

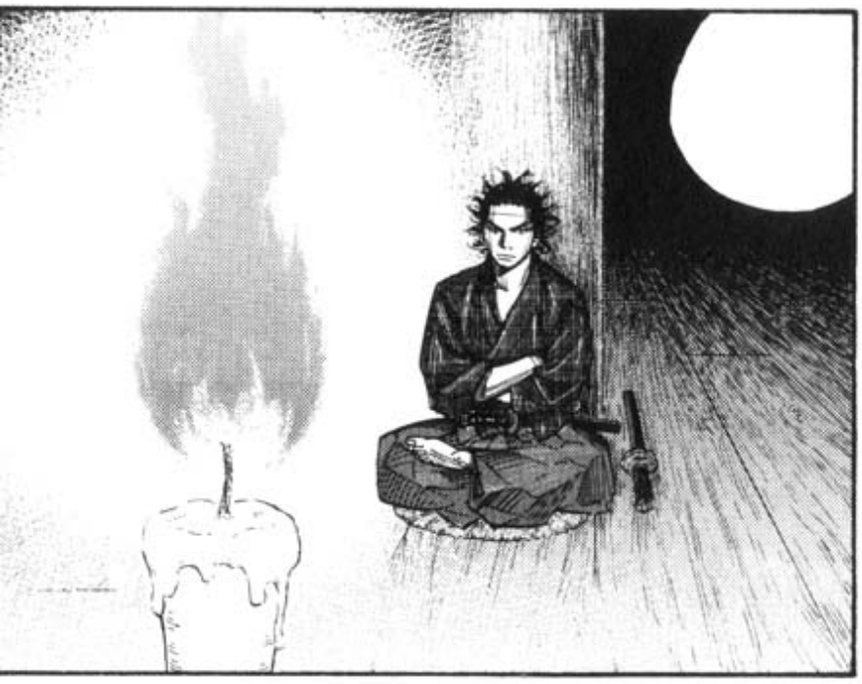

KAWW
KAWW
I'LL TAKE ON THE WHOLE CASTLE IF I HAVE TO.











FSH
FSSH

FSH
FSSH
FSSH
.....
THANK YOU.
THEREFORE WE CANNOT WELCOME YOU INTO THE DOJO AS A GUEST.
WE DO NOT PROVIDE LESSONS FOR ANY ON THE WARRIOR'S PILGRIMAGE. THAT IS OUR POLICY.
HOWEVER, WE TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY TO INVITE YOU HERE TO DISCUSS THE WAYS OF THE SWORD.

AND HE HAS A PENETRATING GAZE...
BUT HIS PHYSIQUE IS IMPRES-SIVE.

HE'S VERY YOUNG.
.....

.....
GLUG GLUG

HERE, HAVE A DRINK.
PLEASE... THERE'S NO NEED FOR FORMALITIES.
ALL WE HAVE IS THE HOSPITALITY OF THE MOUNTAINS ...

THAT PEONY STEM YOU INQUIRED ABOUT...
FWIP

OUR LORD, THE MASTER OF THE YAGYŪ CLAN WAS THE ONE WHO CUT THAT FLOWER.
...!!
PHEW
.....
AH! HE FINALLY BREAKS INTO A SMILE.
HA HA!
SO IT WAS YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI !!
GLUG GLUG
I'M HAPPY TO HEAR IT WAS CUT BY MASTER SEKISHŪSAI.
AND WHY WOULD THAT BE?

HA HA. SO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A FORMIDABLE SWORDSMAN.
HERE, DRINK UP.

.....

HAD IT NOT BEEN MASTER SEKISHŪSAI, HAD IT BEEN ANY OTHER...
...THAT WOULD MEAN I'M NO MATCH AGAINST THE YAGYŪ SCHOOL.

"ORDINARY ...?"
HMPH ...
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EITHER END OF THE STEM...?
BUT HOW CAN YOU TELL THE QUALITY OF THE CUT?
BOTH ENDS LOOK THE SAME. ORDINARY MEN SUCH AS OURSELVES CANNOT TELL THE DIFFERENCE.
IT'S DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN... I JUST FELT IT...
.....
WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU MEAN BY "YOU FELT IT"?
.....
PERHAPS YOU CAN ENLIGHTEN THOSE OF US WHO ARE NOT AS FAR ALONG IN THE WAY AS YOU.
WE, TOO, HAVE DEVOTED OUR LIVES TO THE WAY OF THE SWORD.

THIS SHINKAGE HALL WAS ORIGINALLY BUILT FOR MASTER KAMI'IZUMI ISENOKAMI FOR HIS STAYS HERE.
THIS HALL IS SO DEEPLY CONNECTED TO THE WAY OF THE SWORD. IT IS MOST FITTING FOR US TO HOLD OUR DISCUSSION HERE.

.....

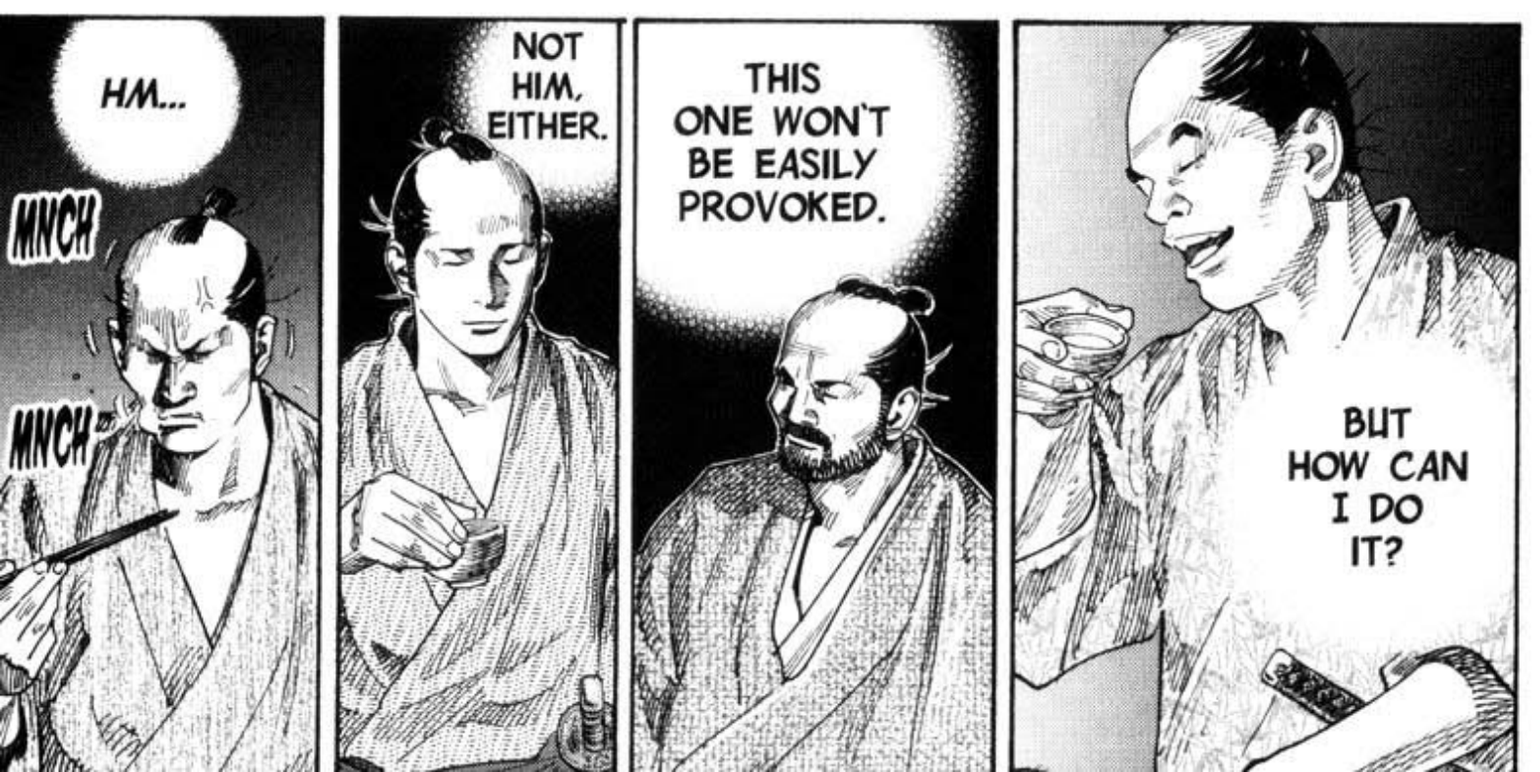
I'M SORRY...
I'VE NEVER HAD A PROPER MASTER.
I'VE BEEN RAISED BY THE MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS.
SOME...
...HAVE EVEN REFERRED TO ME AS "DEMON CHILD" AND "BEAST."
I DONT HAVE THE WORDS TO EXPLAIN ANY FURTHER...
BUT IF YOU REALLY MUST KNOW...
...TAKE UP YOUR SWORD AND CHALLENGE ME TO A FIGHT. THERE'S REALLY NO OTHER WAY.

HA
HA
HA...

THIS
YOUNG
ONE HAS
SOME
NERVE!

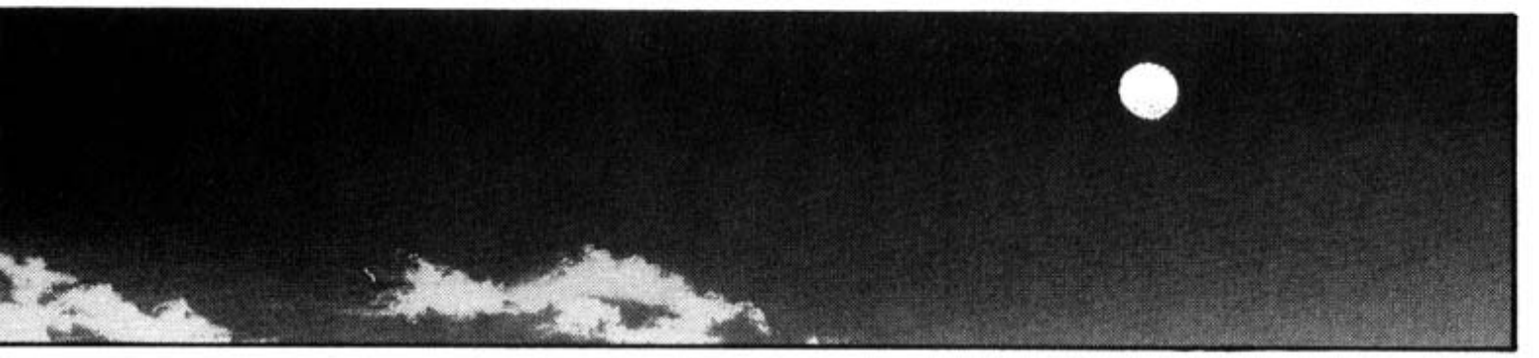
.....
MNCH
MNCH
.....
FWIP

I'LL NEVER GET ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO GET THIS CLOSE TO SEKISHŪSAI.
TONIGHT'S MY ONLY CHANCE.


HM...
MNCH
MNCH
NOT HIM, EITHER.
THIS ONE WON'T BE EASILY PROVOKED.
BUT HOW CAN I DO IT?

THE NAME'S MURATA!
NUMATA.
OH, EXCUSE ME, NURATA.
HE'S THE ONE.
OH...SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO BE RUDE TO A GUEST.
THIS ONE IS SHORT TEMPERED!
YURCH
I TOLD YOU, IT'S MURATA! ARE YOU TOYING WITH ME?!
HEY!
NOT A GREAT STRATEGY, BUT IT'S ALL I'VE GOT. TONIGHT'S MY ONLY CHANCE.
I'LL PROVOKE HIM AND FIND A WAY IN.

YOU! WAIT AND SEE, YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI.
YOUR REPUTATION AS AN INVINCIBLE SWORDSMAN SHALL BE MINE!



GRR...

FWIP
FWIP

FSH
FSH

YOU'VE SCARRED THE FACE OF A SAMURAI!
DO YOU REALIZE HOW MUCH SHAME YOU'VE CAUSED ME?!
THERE YOU ARE.
NOW IT'S TIME WE FIGHT FOR REAL!
GRRRRRR

Vagabond

(GLARE...)
(

#87
Provocateur
YAGYŪ CASTLE...
IN ONE CORNER OF THE ESTATE LIES A HALL KNOWN AS SHINKAGEDŌ.
FEW IN THE CASTLE ARE AWARE THAT THE FOUR SENIOR DISCIPLES OF THE YAGYŪ HAVE INVITED MIYAMOTO MUSASHI ONTO THE PREMISES TO DISCUSS SWORDSMANSHIP.

IT BEGAN WITH A DISCUSSION OF SWORD FIGHTING...
...AND THEN ZEN.
THEN THEY MOVED ON TO RUMORS CIRCULATING THROUGHOUT THE LAND.

...AND MIYAMOTO MUSASHI. THEY HAD FOUGHT ON DIFFERENT SIDES, BUT THEY WERE ALL THERE...

HOWEVER, THEIR DISCUSSIONS OF THE BATTLE OF SEKIGAHARA TRULY BONDED THESE MEN TOGETHER. DEBUCHI MAGOBE...
...SHŌDA KIZAEMON...

.....

...KIMURA SUKEKURŌ...

I DIDN'T COME HERE TO CHAT.
I'M HERE TO FIGHT WITH MY SWORD.
WHAT AM I DOING?
EVEN IF IT MEANS I HAVE TO TAKE ON EVERYONE IN THIS CASTLE...
I WILL BE GRANTED AN AUDIENCE WITH YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...
?
HA HA...
.....
WHAT'S WRONG, MUSASHI?
YOU'RE SO QUIET ALL OF A SUDDEN.

HA HA HA...
WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?
FIVE MEN LIVING BY THE SWORD, SITTING AROUND, CHATTING AWAY.

HOW PECULIAR!

.....
YOU DON'T SEE HOW ABSURD THIS IS?
HA HA HA!

...?
WHAT IS SO RIDICULOUS, MUSASHI?
WHAT...?

HA HA HA!
NO, IT'S RIDICULOUS.

IS IT SO ABSURD FOR SWORDSMEN TO BE DISCUSSING SWORDSMANSHIP?
NOT SO MUCH ABSURD...
...AS IT IS PITIFUL.
.....
...?
THEN HOW CAN WE KNOW IF THE YAGYŪ SCHOOL TRULY DESERVES ITS REPUTATION?
WE HEAR ALL ABOUT THE YAGYŪ, BUT...
YOU JUST SAID IT WAS ABSURD!!
THE YAGYŪ SCHOOL TURNS AWAY ALL WANDERING SAMURAI.
YES, THERE ARE SIMPLY FAR TOO MANY OF THEM.

...!!
...WHO KNOWS WHAT THE TRUTH IS...

SO...DO YOU STAY CLOISTERED IN THIS REMOTE SCHOOL IN THE MOUNTAINS...
...AND GATHER IN THIS NICE HALL TO "DISCUSS" SWORDSMANSHIP EVERY DAY?

AND A COUNTER WITH "I DISAGREE WITH YOU, SIR..."
"MY STRENGTHS IN SWORSMANSHIP ARE SUCH AND SUCH..."

HA HA HA HA HA!!
HOW RIDICULOUS!!
THE RIDICULOUS YAGYŪ!!

.....

YOU HAVE A POINT.
SMIRK
HA HA HA! I SEE.
SO THAT'S HOW SOME OUTSIDERS VIEW US.
...!!

HE'S STILL TOO IMMATURE.

HE ONLY HAD A HUNCH ABOUT THE FLOWER. IT WAS A LUCKY GUESS...
HE IMPRESSED ME WITH HIS CLAIM TO HAVE RECOGNIZED THE MAGNIFICENT CUT ON THE FLOWER, BUT I SEEM TO HAVE OVERESTIMATED HIM.

CAN'T HE SEE HOW HE'S DEMEANING HIMSELF BY DOING THIS...?
A WARRIOR WITH TRUE TALENT WOULD NEVER BE SO DESPERATE TO SHOW OFF HIS STRENGTH...

OH, NO!
.....
BRR BRR BRR BRR
HMPH! NONE OF US ARE SIMPLE ENOUGH TO BE PROVOKED SO EASILY.
KLAK KLAK
YOU'RE TREMBLING...
...!!
THE NAME'S MURATA!!
NOT MUFATA! YOU GOT THAT?!!
MURATA !!
THUD
WHAT'S WRONG, MUFATA?

I'M SO SORRY.
HA HA HA...

DARN, THESE GUYS...

.....
WE'RE OUT OF SAKE!!
GO GET SOME FOR US!!
GO!

ARF
ARF
ARF

ARF
ARF
WHAT'S THAT?

DO THEY SEE THROUGH MY PLAN?
I'VE MANAGED TO GET INTO THE CASTLE. I CAN'T LEAVE WITHOUT FIGHTING SEKISHŪSAI!!
HOW CAN I GET TO HIM?

WHAT AM I DOING, INSULTING A DOG?
ARF
ARF
HMPH
STUPID DOG IS TOO LOUD.
.....
ARF
ARF
GRRR
ARF
ARF
GRRR
.....
GRRR
HE DOESN'T USUALLY BARK LIKE THIS.
SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED...
GRRR
ISN'T THAT TARŌ?
GRRR

GRRP
AKF
EXCUSE US FOR A MOMENT.
PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.
SOME-THING'S WRONG.
PLEASE EXCUSE ME...
I'LL GO TAKE A LOOK.
AKF
!!!!
PEACE CAN NEVER LAST.
DON'T YOU AGREE?
.....

FOR ALL WE KNOW, SOME PROVINCE MIGHT HAVE SENT A SPY HERE.
YOU SEE...
YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT SOME SCOUNDREL WILL DO FOR THE SAKE OF AMBITION.
ONE OF THEM COULD CREATE A DISTRACTION ...
THE SPY MIGHT EVEN HAVE A PARTNER.
WHILE THE OTHER PROCEEDS TO ASSASINATE OUR LORD.
...

HOW PATHETIC IT WOULD BE FOR THE PLAN TO BE FOILED BY A GUARD DOG.
WHAT THE SPY WOULD DO IN THAT SITUATION.
I WONDER...
HE THINKS I'M A SPY!

WHAT A GREAT CHANCE.
COME ON, DRAW YOUR SWORD ON ME.
YIP!
!
THE DOG MUST BE DEAD...

.....
HE COULDN'T HAVE...!
GASP!
MMBL
MMBL
MMBL
MMBL

HE'S DEAD...!!
POOR TARŌ...
MUNENORI'S PRECIOUS DOG TARŌ.
SWAP
YOU BRAT!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
!!
THAT DOG IS RESPONS-IBLE.
I JUST CAME TO GET MY REVENGE!
FWICH
HEY!
LOOK AT THESE SCRATCHES ON MY FACE.
FWUMP

I FORMALLY CHALLENGED HIM!!
THAT'S ENOUGH OF YOUR FOOLISH TALK!
AND I WON!!

YOU CAN'T GET BACK AT ME FOR GETTING BACK AT HIM!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

NNGH
FWUMP

THUNK
CAN'T YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A DOG AND A MAN?!

.....
YOU SHALL BE PUNISHED !!
I'LL BEAT YOU TO DEATH LIKE YOU DID TO THIS DOG!! NOW STAND UP!!
KILL ME IF YOU MUST...

I'LL KILL YOU!!
...BUT I'M TAKING YOU WITH ME...!!

.....

YOU LITTLE BRAT!!
YOU DEMON CHILD!!

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. For his work on *VAGABOND*, Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts award for Manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga. Most recently in 2002, Inoue's *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka award for best manga. To date, *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords at once, holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films, *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003, NHK produced the historical period drama, *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this comic are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname, followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

Higo
Located in modern day Kumamoto Prefecture.

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Kami'izumi Ise no Kami Hidetsuna (1508-1577(?))
The son of Kami'izumi Ise no Kami Hidetsugu, the lord of Kami'izumi Castle in present-day Gunma Prefecture. Hidetsuna founded the Shinkage-ryu Style of sword fighting and was such an accomplished swordsman and military strategist that he was once recruited by the famed Takeda Shingen. Hidetsuna, however, declined the post, stating that he preferred to travel throughout the land so that he might perfect his swordsmanship. Many notable figures studied under Hidetsuna including the esteemed Yagyu Munenori and Hozoin In'ei.

Owari
Located in modern day Nagoya and its surrounding area.

Sakushu
Located in modern day Okayama Prefecture.

The Sengoku Period and the Battle of Sekigahara
The Warring States or *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weaker and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of all of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating an orderly federation amongst the *daimyo,* and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its five-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key general's at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the *ometsuke*—responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evil-doers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND* as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions..

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editor's choice

Vagabond

To the trained eye, a single cut flower can be more revealing about a man's fighting skills than witnessing a duel to the death. When Musashi is given a flower cut by master swordsman Yagyu Sekishusai, he realizes he must seek this man out—for Sekishusai may turn out to be the greatest swordsman Musashi will ever meet.

This book reads from right to left.

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